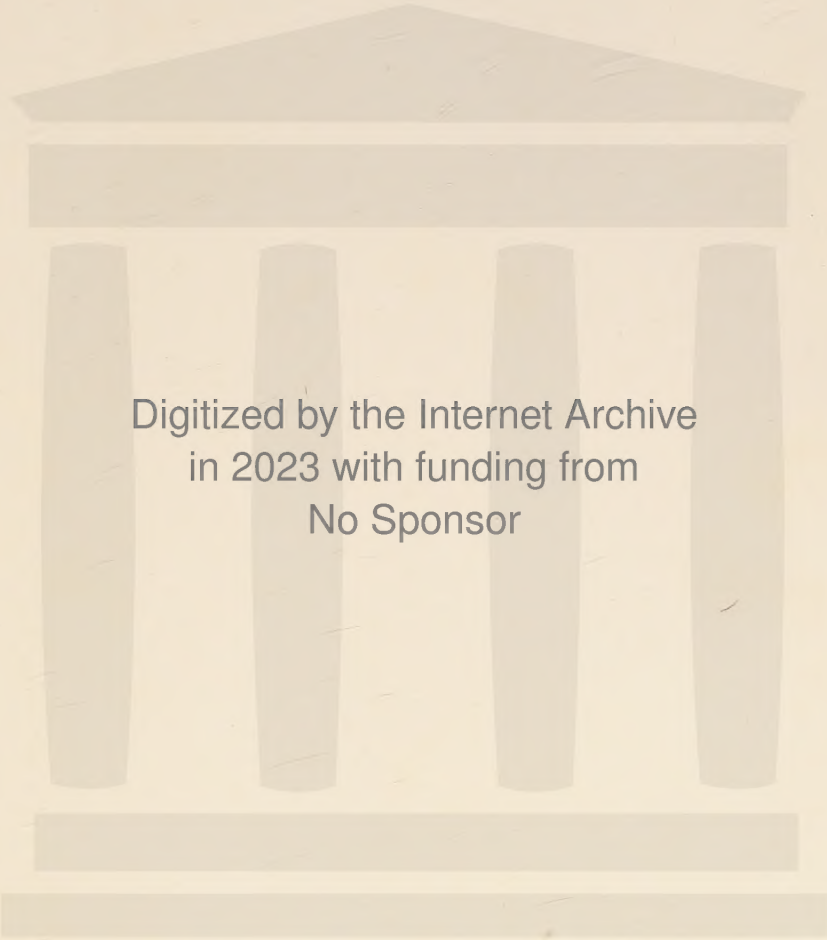


THE
BIBLE STORY BOOK
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

JANE EAYRE FRYER



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ARISE, TAKE THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER, AND FLEE INTO EGYPT

**THE
BIBLE STORY BOOK
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS**

by
JANE EAYRE FRYER
IN COLLABORATION WITH
REV. JOHN G. FRYER

ILLUSTRATED BY
EDWIN JOHN PRITTIE

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PREFACE

In writing this book the author's chief purpose has been to make the Bible real and vivid to the children of to-day by a sympathetic and reverent presentation of the principal Bible stories. The subject is presented from the child's point of view, because that method of approach (which is the method of the great Teacher himself) has proved so successful in the seven books of the Mary Frances Story Instruction Series. Nowhere has there been a conscious departure from the plain meaning of the Biblical narrative, or anything added not clearly contained therein. For the sake of vividness, some of the characters have been allowed to tell their own stories in the first person.

It seems hardly necessary to say that the author regards instruction in Bible truth as the precious birthright of every child, which it is a primary duty of parent and teacher to see that he receives.

JANE EAYRE FRYER.

MERCHANTVILLE, N. J.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	BEFORE THE FLOOD	PAGE
I.	MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BIBLE PEOPLE.....	15
II.	THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN..... The Story of the Beautiful Garden.	19
III.	NOAH, THE SHIP-BUILDER..... The Building of the Ark—The Loading of the Ark—The Coming of the Flood—The Going Down of the Waters.	24
	THE CHOSEN PEOPLE	
IV.	THE CHOSEN FAMILY..... Abram, the Friend of God—God's Promise—The Offering of Isaac—The Courtship of Isaac and Rebekah.	35
V.	THE TWO BROTHERS..... Esau Sells His Birthright—The Stolen Blessing—The Flight of Jacob—The Angels' Ladder—Jacob Meets Rachel—Jacob Grows Rich—Jacob Escapes from Laban—Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau—Jacob Wrestles with an Angel—Jacob Meets Esau—Jacob Returns Home.	50
VI.	THE STORY OF JOSEPH..... Sold Into Slavery—A Slave in Egypt—Pharaoh's Dream—Joseph, the Ruler of Egypt—Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt—The Brothers Go Again—Joseph Makes Himself Known—Jacob Moves to Egypt—The Children of Israel in Egypt.	72
	THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN SLAVERY	
VII.	A GREAT LEADER..... The People are Oppressed—Moses is Born—Moses Kills an Egyptian—Moses Becomes a Shepherd—The Burning Bush—Moses and Aaron.	99
VIII.	THE TEN PLAGUES..... The River of Blood—The Plague of Frogs—The Plague of Lice—The Plague of Flies—The Murrain—The Plague of Boils—The Plague of Hail—The Plague of Locusts—The Plague of Darkness—The Plague of Death.	110
IX.	THE FLIGHT FROM EGYPT..... Crossing the Red Sea—Wandering in the Desert.	124
	THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF PROMISE	
X.	JOSHUA, THE MAN OF COURAGE..... Into the Promised Land—The Capture of Jericho—The Crafty Men of Gibeon—Five Kings in a Cave—The Death of Joshua.	135
XI.	GIDEON JUDGES ISRAEL..... Gideon and His Three Hundred—The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon.	142
XII.	SAMSON, THE STRONG MAN..... His Feats of Strength—He Loses His Strength—He Regains His Strength and Dies.	145

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIII.	THE STORY OF RUTH.....	152
	Naomi and Her Family Leave Home—Naomi Returns with Ruth— Naomi Seeks a Husband for Ruth.	
	THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF THE KINGS	
XIV.	SAMUEL AND SAUL.....	161
	The Child Samuel—The People Demand a King—Saul's Great Sin.	
XV.	THE STORY OF DAVID.....	167
	Samuel Anoints David—Saul's Evil Spirit—David and the Giant Goliath—Saul Attempts David's Life—The Friendship of David and Jonathan—David Gets the Giant's Sword—David Spares Saul's Life— David Spares Saul's Life a Second Time—Death of Saul and Jonathan.	
XVI.	KING SOLOMON.....	187
	Solomon's Wise Choice—Whose Child?—The Queen of Sheba— Solomon's Riches—Solomon's Sin.	
XVII.	ELIJAH AND ELISHA.....	195
	A Strange Message—The Contest with the False Prophets—The Chariot of Fire—How a Syrian General was Healed.	
XVIII.	JONAH, THE RUNAWAY PROPHET.....	208
	He is Swallowed by a Great Fish—He Escapes, and Obeys God—He Rebels Again.	
	THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN CAPTIVITY	
XIX.	ESTHER, THE CAPTIVE MAID WHO BECAME QUEEN.....	215
	Queen Vashti Refuses to Obey the King—Esther is Made Queen— Haman Seeks Revenge—The Great Mourning of Mordecai—Esther Pleads for Mordecai—The Downfall of Haman—Esther Pleads for Her People—Haman's Plot is Foiled.	
XX.	DANIEL AND HIS THREE FRIENDS.....	226
	They Refuse to Eat the King's Food—The Idol and the Stone—The Fiery Furnace—The Handwriting on the Wall—Daniel in the Den of Lions.	
XXI.	NEHEMIAH, THE PATRIOT.....	240
	The King's Cupbearer—He Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem.	
	GOOD TIDINGS FOR ALL NATIONS	
XXII.	BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF JESUS.....	247
	Jesus is Born—The Angels and the Shepherds—Wise Men from the East Visit Him—The Flight Into Egypt—Herod Attempts to Kill Him—The Return to Nazareth—A Boyhood Visit to Jerusalem.	
XXIII.	JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST.....	253
	The Voice in the Wilderness—John Baptizes Jesus—Jesus Gains His First Disciples.	
XXIV.	JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK.....	256
	His First Miracle—He Drives the Traders Out of the Temple—He Heals a Nobleman's Son—He is Driven Out of Nazareth—He Calls Four Disciples—He Drives Out a Demon—The First Leper Healed— A Sick Man Let Down Through a Roof—The Man with the Withered Hand—A Helpless Man Cured.	

CONTENTS

9

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXV.	WONDERFUL WORDS AND WORKS OF JESUS.....	267
	The Twelve Apostles—The Sermon on the Mount—An Army Officer's Servant—Jesus Brings the Dead to Life—Jesus Stills the Storm—The Ruler's Daughter Healed—Jesus Visits His Home Again—How John the Baptist Died.	
XXVI.	GREAT CROWDS FOLLOW JESUS.....	276
	Five Thousand People Fed—Jesus Walks on the Water—Peter's Confession—The Transfiguration—The Boy with the Dumb Spirit— The Unmerciful Servant.	
XXVII.	HIS ENEMIES DETERMINE TO KILL JESUS.....	282
	They Attempt to Stone Him—The Man Born Blind—Another Attempt to Stone Him—He Raises Lazarus from the Dead—The Plotters in Council—Jesus Blesses Little Children.	
XXVIII.	THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.....	290
	Jesus Foretells His Death—The Blind Beggar of Jericho—Zacchæus Climbs a Tree to See Jesus—The Feast at Bethany.	
XXIX.	LAST DAYS IN JERUSALEM.....	294
	Palm Sunday—Jesus Cleanses the Temple the Second Time—Jesus Tells More About the Future—Before the Judgment Seat—Judas Betrays His Master.	
XXX.	THE FAREWELL SUPPER.....	300
	Who is Greatest?—Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet—The Traitor— "In Remembrance of Me"—Farewell Words—In the Garden of Gethsemane—The Arrest.	
XXXI.	THE TRIAL OF JESUS.....	307
	Before Annas—Before Caiaphas—Peter Denies His Master—Before the Jewish Council—The End of the Traitor—Jesus Before Pilate— Jesus Before Herod—Jesus Before Pilate Again.	
XXXII.	AT THE CROSS.....	315
	"Father, Forgive Them"—The Soldiers—The People—The Robbers— Jesus' Mother—Darkness Over the Land—An Earthquake—The Burial—The Watch at the Tomb.	
XXXIII.	JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD.....	321
	The Empty Tomb—He Appears to the Women—Report of the Watch- men—The Walk to Emmaus—He Appears to His Disciples—He Appears to Thomas—He Appears to Seven by the Sea—He Appears to the Eleven on a Mountain—He Ascends to Heaven.	
	SPREADING THE GOOD TIDINGS	
XXXIV.	COWARDS BECOME BRAVE MEN.....	333
	The Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate—The Disciples in Prison—The Young Man Who was Stoned to Death—Saul Blinded by a Great Light—Peter in Prison.	
XXXV.	PAUL, THE MISSIONARY.....	343
	The Call to Europe—Paul and Silas in Prison—Paul Goes to Jerusalem —Attempt to Kill Paul—Paul Goes to Rome, a Prisoner.	
XXXVI.	FRIENDS FOR LIFE.....	350

ILLUSTRATIONS

ARISE, TAKE THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER, AND FLEE INTO EGYPT.....	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
BEFORE THE FLOOD.....	13
WRITING A BOOK IN OLDEN TIMES.....	15
SO GOD BANISHED ADAM FROM THE GARDEN, AND HAND IN HAND EVE WENT WITH HIM.....	19
AND LO, TOWARD EVENING SHE FLEW BACK WITH AN OLIVE LEAF IN HER MOUTH.....	24
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.....	33
"LET ME, I PRAY YOU, DRINK A LITTLE WATER FROM YOUR PITCHER".	35
"LAY NOT YOUR HAND UPON THE LAD"	41
HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE JACOB BECAUSE HIS HANDS WERE Hairy LIKE HIS BROTHER ESAU'S.....	50
JOSEPH BUILT GREAT STOREHOUSES TO STORE THE GRAIN.....	72
SO THEY QUICKLY DREW JOSEPH OUT OF THE WELL, AND SOLD HIM FOR TWENTY PIECES OF SILVER TO THE ARAB MERCHANTS.....	76
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN SLAVERY.....	97
THEN MOSES BURIED THE DEAD MAN IN THE SAND.....	99
A VOICE CALLED TO HIM OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE, AND SAID, "MOSES! MOSES!"	105
THE FROGS CAME UP AND COVERED THE LAND.....	110
THE EGYPTIANS TRIED TO ESCAPE, BUT WERE OVERTHROWN IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA.....	124
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF PROMISE.....	133
"SUN, STAND THOU STILL UPON GIBEON," CRIED JOSHUA.....	135
EVERY MAN BLEW HIS TRUMPET, BROKE HIS PITCHER, AND FLASHED HIS BLAZING TORCH IN THE DARKNESS.....	142
SAMSON'S CRUEL CAPTORS PUT OUT BOTH HIS EYES, AND MADE HIM GRIND CORN IN THE PRISON HOUSE.....	145
SAMSON SEIZED THE LION BY THE JAWS.....	147
"WHO IS THIS YOUNG WOMAN?" HE ASKED THE CHIEF REAPER.....	152
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF THE KINGS.....	159
"I DID NOT CALL YOU, MY SON; LIE DOWN AGAIN," ELI REPLIED.....	161
LEAPING UP, HE HURLED THE SPEAR FULL AT DAVID.....	167
STANDING OVER HIM, HE QUICKLY DREW THE GIANT'S SWORD AND CUT OFF HIS HEAD.....	172
"GIVE HER THE LIVING CHILD," HE SAID. "DO NOT KILL IT; SHE IS ITS MOTHER"	187

	PAGE
ELIJAH WENT UP IN THE CHARIOT BY A WHIRLWIND INTO HEAVEN.....	195
THE RAVENS BROUGHT HIM BREAD AND MEAT.....	197
AT LAST THEY TOOK UP JONAH AND THREW HIM OVERBOARD INTO THE SEA	208
THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN CAPTIVITY.....	213
SO ESTHER DREW NEAR IN SAFETY, AND TOUCHED THE TOP OF THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE.....	215
"LO, I SEE FOUR MEN, LOOSE, WALKING IN THE FIRE, AND THEY ARE NOT HURT"	226
VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING THE KING AROSE, AND CAME IN HASTE TO THE DEN OF LIONS.....	237
OTHERS SET GREAT STONES AND REPAIRED THE BROKEN WALLS.....	240
GOOD TIDINGS FOR ALL NATIONS.....	245
THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, "BE NOT AFRAID: FOR BEHOLD, I BRING YOU TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE".....	247
"REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND"	253
"FILL THE WATER JARS WITH WATER"	256
SITTING IN THE BOAT, HE SPOKE TO THE CROWD ON THE SHORE.....	261
JESUS AROSE AND REBUKED THE WIND, AND SAID TO THE SEA: "PEACE, BE STILL"	267
"LITTLE GIRL, I SAY TO YOU, RISE UP"	272
AND BEHOLD, MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED BEFORE THEM, AND THEY TALKED WITH JESUS.....	276
JESUS PUT CLAY ON THE MAN'S EYES, AND SAID TO HIM, "GO, WASH IN THE POOL OF SILOAM"	282
"SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN".....	288
WHEN JESUS REACHED THE TREE, HE LOOKED UP AND SAW THE TAX COLLECTOR.....	290
"HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID"	294
"TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS LORD"	300
WHEN HE SAW JESUS HE SAID, "HAIL, MASTER," AND KISSED HIM....	305
THEN PILATE ENTERED INTO THE PALACE AGAIN, AND CALLED JESUS, AND JESUS STOOD BEFORE HIM.....	307
"LET US NOT TEAR HIS COAT, BUT CAST LOTS FOR IT," THEY SAID.....	315
THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM, AND THE TWO ROBBERS.....	317
"MARY," JESUS SAID GENTLY.....	321
THEN JOHN KNEW WHO IT WAS, AND SAID TO PETER, "IT IS THE LORD"....	327
SPREADING THE GOOD TIDINGS.....	331
A VOLLEY OF STONES BROUGHT STEPHEN TO HIS KNEES.....	333
PAUL CRIED OUT TO HIM, "DO YOURSELF NO HARM, FOR WE ARE ALL HERE"	343
SHE CLUCKED TO HER HORSE AND TURNED THE SLEIGH TOWARD HOME....	350



BEFORE THE FLOOD

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
—GENESIS 1:1.



WRITING A BOOK IN OLDEN TIMES

I

MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BIBLE PEOPLE

IF you had been watching, one early winter morning, the big old country house in which Aunt Maria lived, you would have known that something unusual was about to happen. For the twentieth time that morning, the little old lady opened the big colonial front door and stepped out.

Shading her eyes with her hand, she peered up the road, and for the twentieth time she exclaimed, "No sign of them yet! Such heathen contraptions!"

And if you had followed her into the house, you would have heard her mutter to herself: "What's the world coming to, anyway? Such contraptions! I'd never have trusted the best driver that ever drove an automobile to bring those precious children."

The "precious children" she was so eagerly expecting were Billy and Mary Frances, who were coming to visit their great aunt while their parents were away on a winter trip to Europe.

Then you would have seen her peer out the window, and heard her mutter again: "No sign of them yet! My, I'm thankful

I didn't invent such dangerous machines! Why, what's that noise? I do believe a car has stopped in front of the house!"

She hurried to the door, but almost before she turned the knob, it flew open and the two children came running in.

Mary Frances flung her arms around the little old lady's neck. "Aunt Maria, were you worried? Did you think we had had an accident?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"We had two blow-outs," Billy stated, rather proudly.

"Blow-outs!" repeated the old lady, who did not understand what he meant. "Was anyone killed, child?"

"Oh, no, that means the air went out of the tires," the boy explained.

"Well, I am certainly thankful to see you safe and sound," said the old lady rather stiffly, as though a little ashamed of having shown that she had not understood. "Let us go thank your friends for bringing you, and invite them in."

But their friends could not be persuaded to stop; and so, bidding the children and their aunt good-by, they drove away.

It was Saturday afternoon. Mary Frances stood looking out of the window with her face pressed against the pane. All day the snow had been falling, and the wind had been blowing it in high piles against the buildings in her aunt's garden. Her brother was having a good time, bravely trying to shovel a path through the thick whiteness.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed to herself, as she watched him; "Oh, dear, how I hope it stops snowing before morning! I'm afraid Aunt Maria will make us learn a whole long chapter of the Bible if we cannot get to Sunday school."

Just at that moment the old lady came into the room.

"What are you doing, child?" she asked. "Come over to the fire. Bring your chair."

Mary Frances brought the little old-fashioned chair, and sat down opposite her aunt, in front of the blazing logs.

MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE BIBLE PEOPLE 17

"Do you think the storm will keep us from Sunday school?" she asked.

"I cannot say, child," said her aunt; "but if it does, we can have Sunday school at home."

"Oh, dear!" thought Mary Frances. "Oh, dear, now I feel sure we'll have to learn those chapters, just as father did when he was a boy and lived with Aunt Maria."

But she said aloud, "Aunt Maria, won't you please tell me a story?"

"Child, do you know the Bible story of the beginning of the world?" asked the old lady instantly, as though she had been expecting this request.

"No," said Mary Frances, drawing her chair closer to her aunt's. "Please—will you tell it to me?"

"I cannot tell such a wonderful thing in my own words, but I will read it to you," she replied. "I suspect that you do not know many of the stories in the Bible. Mary Frances, I believe it's an act of Providence that you children have been sent to visit me while your parents are away. It will be no fault of mine if you do not learn some of the most beautiful stories ever told to human beings."

"Stories!" exclaimed Mary Frances in delight. "You will tell us stories, Aunt Maria?"

"I want you to read some of them yourselves, and then tell them to me," replied her aunt. "To-morrow we will begin, for I hardly think we shall be able to go far through the snow."

Just then Billy came bounding in. "Ready for tea?" asked Aunt Maria, in answer to his smile, and taking Mary Frances' hand, she led the way into the dining room.

"Fine," said the hungry boy, between bites, as they told him of their plan.

Aunt Maria's prophecy came true. When Mary Frances woke up the next morning, the snow was still falling. No fences were to be seen, and there was no sign of life out of doors, except a few

snowbirds which were gathered on the step outside the dining-room door, busily eating the crumbs which Billy, who was also an early bird, had already thrown out to them.

"Sunday school at home," whispered Mary Frances, fastening her shoe laces. "I must hurry, or I shall be late to breakfast."

"Good morning, Aunt Maria," she said, entering the dining room. "I saw the birds eating their breakfast. I should love to feed them to-morrow."

"So you shall, child," answered her aunt, with a smile. "You look very happy this morning."

"I am thinking about the stories—the stories you said we must hear," replied Mary Frances.

Right after breakfast Aunt Maria said, "Now we will have our Sunday school. For our lesson I will read you the story of The Beginning of the World."

And so the children heard about the beginning of things, as told in the first and a part of the second chapter of Genesis.



SO GOD BANISHED ADAM FROM THE GARDEN, AND HAND IN HAND EVE WENT WITH HIM

II

THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

THAT afternoon, Mary Frances was sitting by the fire, feeling very lonely as she thought of her father and mother, who would soon be far away, and her brother was lying on the floor, idly poking the blazing logs, when Aunt Maria came quietly into the room, carrying a mysterious-looking book.

"I have a surprise for you, Billy—an old book I had forgotten all about," she said, dusting it off carefully, and placing it in his hands.

As soon as the boy felt the soft brown leather covers, and glanced curiously inside, he knew that this book was not like other books. For one thing, the pages, which were yellow with age, were not printed; they were written in a fine long running hand, a bit faded, but still quite easy to read.

"Oh, Auntie, what clear writing!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, child, that is the handwriting of my brother, your Uncle Ben—really your great-uncle, you know, who was pastor

of our church when he was a young man. He was very fond of telling Bible stories. Sometimes it seemed just as if the Bible people were present and really talking. He wrote down many of his stories in this old book."

"Oh, I should love to read them!" cried Mary Frances.

"Of course you would," said the boy; "but this is my book," holding it tight; "Aunt Maria gave it to me." The old lady looked on amused, and Billy relented. "Well, I'll let you read it," he said, "if you'll read it aloud to me." "Yes, that's a good plan, Mary Frances," said Aunt Maria. "Suppose you read the first story, and tell me about it afterwards."

As Aunt Maria left the room, Mary Frances turned to the first story in Uncle Ben's book, and began to read aloud.

* * * * *

The Story of the Beautiful Garden

When God had made the earth, and covered it with grass and trees, and put birds in the air, and fish in the sea, and animals on the land, he chose the most beautiful spot in it for the home of man.

This spot was a wonderful garden called the Garden of Eden, and in it he put the man he had made. This man was called Adam, and he was there alone. His duty was to care for the garden and keep it in order.

The most beautiful trees in the world grew in the garden, and a river of sparkling water flowed through it to water them. The trees were very pleasant, and their fruit was good for food. In the center of the garden there grew the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was a marvelous tree, and so God gave the keeper of the garden strict commands concerning it.

"You may eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except one," God told him; "and that one is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You must not eat of that, for in the day that you do you will surely die."

Of course, Adam, who was the keeper, obeyed, and thought little more about it, apparently. What troubled him most was that he was lonely. When God saw this, he said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will give him company."

So God brought the animals that he had created, and all the birds of the air to Adam and told him to name them. He named every bird that flies and every animal in the garden, and he had a very happy time while doing it. At last all were named—but Adam was still lonely.

God saw this and caused him to fall into a deep sleep; while he was asleep, God took one of the man's ribs from his side, and formed a woman, and brought her to the man, and she became his wife.

For a long time they lived happily together in their beautiful home, with the birds and animals about them. They loved each other and all created things; they talked with God as a friend, and he talked with them, and they knew nothing of evil or wrong.

Now, among the animals in the garden there was one they cared the least about; this was the serpent.

One day the woman was very restless and wanted something to interest her. The serpent, who was watching, always watching, asked, "Has God told you not to eat the fruit of any particular tree in the garden?"

"Yes," she replied, without thinking, "we may eat the fruit of all the trees except one, the great tree in the center of the garden. God has warned us that we must not eat of it lest we die."

This was what Adam had often told her, and she repeated it without thinking.

When the serpent heard this, he said, "That cannot be; you shall not surely die, for God well knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil."

Like the foolish woman that she was, she believed the tempter. Having nothing better to do, she thought there would be no harm

in looking at the tree, at any rate. So off she went. Now, on this day the fruit happened to be just ripe, and a delight to the eye. How tempting it was! As she looked at it, she wondered if it would really make one wise, and then—she reached up and plucked some of the ripest.

She held it in her hand and admired it. How good it looked and smelled! Then she put some in her mouth. How good it tasted! It was better than all the other fruit of the garden. Off she tripped to her husband and offered some to him, and he ate, too.

Even while they were eating, the sky overhead suddenly grew dark; they looked at each other and knew they had done wrong. The only thing they were forbidden to do they had done. For the first time, they were ashamed, and tried to hide. They took great leaves and fastened them together, and tried to cover themselves, for they were shivering with fear. But nothing further happened all that afternoon.

When the evening came they heard the voice of God, who was walking in the garden, and they hid among the thick trees, and tried to conceal themselves from his presence.

“Where are you?” It was the voice of God calling Adam.

“I heard a voice in the garden,” he answered, timidly; “and I was afraid and hid myself, because I was not clothed.”

“Who told you that you were not clothed?” said the voice again. “Have you eaten the fruit of the tree which I commanded you not to eat?”

“The woman you gave me offered me the fruit and I ate,” he replied.

“What is this you have done?” the voice asked the woman, sternly.

“The serpent tempted me and I ate,” she replied, frightened.

At this the serpent, who was listening, tried to sneak away, but the stern voice overtook him and stopped him to hear his sentence.

“Because you have done this thing,” God said, “you are

cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field; you shall crawl upon the ground and eat dust all the days of your life, and the children of the woman shall hate the serpent, and shall bruise its head, and the serpent shall bruise their heels."

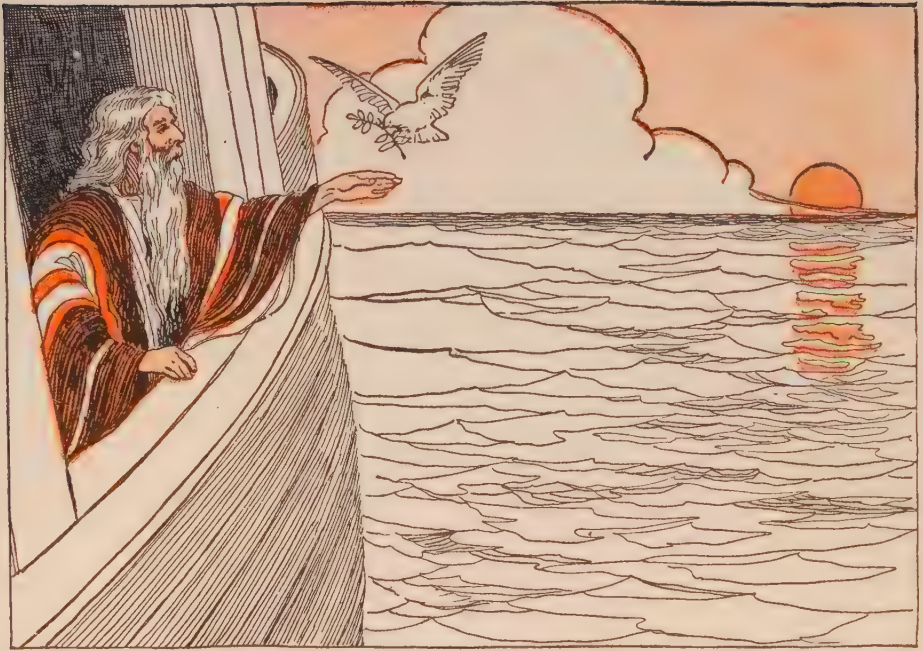
To the woman God said: "Because you have done this, I will greatly increase your suffering, and your children shall cause you sorrow, and your husband shall rule over you."

To Adam he said: "Because you have disobeyed my command and eaten of the fruit which I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed for your sake; by labor you shall eat of it all the days of your life; it shall bring forth thorns and thistles, and you shall eat the plants of the field; in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground from which you were taken, for dust you are and to dust you shall return."

When the voice stopped speaking they looked at each other sorrowfully. Then Adam called his wife "Eve," because she was to be the mother of all living. After that they wore clothing of skins which God had made for them, and were a little comforted.

But their first happiness was never to return, for one day God said: "See, the man is become like one of us, knowing good and evil; I must banish him from the garden, lest he put forth his hand and take the fruit of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

So God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground out of which he was taken, and hand in hand Eve went with him. How frightened they were! When they were outside they turned and looked back, and there they saw angels standing at the gate, and a flaming sword which turned every way, guarding the path to the tree of life.



AND LO, TOWARD EVENING SHE FLEW BACK WITH AN OLIVE LEAF IN HER MOUTH

III

NOAH, THE SHIP-BUILDER

“AUNT MARIA, what happened to Adam and Eve after that?” asked Mary Frances in the evening, as the three were seated comfortably before the fire. She had just finished telling her aunt the Garden of Eden story.

“What happened after that?” repeated the old lady. “My child, it’s a sad story, one of the saddest in the Book. You can read it for yourself in the fourth chapter of Genesis.”

“No, Aunt Maria, if it’s sad, please let’s read it together!”

So the old lady put on her glasses and read, in her old-fashioned way, the tale of two brothers—how the older killed the younger, and what came of it.

Mary Frances listened without a word till the end. Then she cried, “Poor Abel! What made Cain kill him?”

The old lady shook her head. "That's a hard question, dear," she said, sadly. "Perhaps he was jealous."

All sat silent for a while, looking into the fire. At length the little girl asked, "What happened after that, Aunt Maria?"

"Well, the earth became more and more thickly populated, people grew worse and worse as hundreds of years rolled by—and then came Noah."

"Noah!" cried Billy. "Father has often told me about him."

"I don't doubt it. That was one of your Uncle Ben's favorite stories. Your father loved to hear him tell it, just as if Noah were telling it himself to his grandchildren. It is told in the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of Genesis; and also in Uncle Ben's book. Suppose you read Uncle Ben's account this evening, and tell me about it to-morrow."

"Yes, it's your turn to read now, Mister Billy," said Mary Frances, laughingly.

So the brother and sister settled in a quiet corner under the lamp, found the place in the old leather covered book, and were soon lost in the story of Noah. As they read on, it seemed almost as if Noah himself were talking.

* * * * *

The Building of the Ark

When I started to build a ship on dry land, far away from the sea, people opened their eyes in wonder. Such a thing had never been heard of since the world began. They tapped their heads and said, "Noah has gone mad!"

But as the thing turned out, I was wise and they were foolish. This they learned when it was too late.

God had talked with me one day. This was not strange, for I walked with God and always tried to do his will.

"Noah," God said to me, "men have become violent and desperately wicked; they quarrel continually and seek to do evil. There is no good in them. Their time has come; I am about to destroy them from off the face of the earth."

I listened in fear and wonder, but what could I say? I knew that what God said was true, for I had tried to warn them, but they only laughed and paid no heed to my warnings.

Then the Lord told me to do a strange thing—to build a ship on dry land, where no water was; and I obeyed, for who was I to question his command?

"Build an ark of gopher wood," he directed; "and cover it with pitch inside and out, so that it shall be water-tight. Make it three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high,* with windows in it and a door in the side, and lower, second, and third stories."

God explained further what he was about to do.

"Behold," he said, "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy everything that breathes from under heaven; only you and your family and the animals which you gather shall be left alive. For when the flood comes, you and your family shall enter the ark and be saved."

I thanked God for his mercy, and began to carry out his orders. I went to my wife and told her all that God had said. Then I went into the forest with my three sons, and cut down great trees and made them into planks, and brought them into the broad field before my house.

Now the wood of the gopher tree is light and very strong, and with it we laid the keel of the ship in the field, according to the plan which God had given me. My neighbors gathered about and watched us curiously, and asked, "Noah, what are you trying to do?"

"God is about to destroy both man and beast by flood,"

* Allowing 21 inches for a cubit, the ark would be 525 feet in length, 87 feet 6 inches in width, and 52 feet 6 inches in height.

I replied; "and I am building this ark to save my family. Repent, and perhaps God will turn aside his anger."

They went away and laughed, and said, "The earth always has been and always will be." Behind my back they called me an old fool, although they dared not call me so to my face.

Year after year went by, and slowly plank by plank the ark grew, the lower story, the second story, the third story; and then we put on the roof and made the door. Up near the roof we left a window which ran all around the ark. After that we built rooms inside for my family, stalls for the animals, and nests for the birds, and made great storage places for food for man and beast, just as God had said.

Day by day the people came from far and near to watch us, and day by day their wonder grew. Day by day I warned them to repent, for the day of doom drew nearer and nearer; but still they scoffed and mocked and would not listen.

The Loading of the Ark

At last the ark was finished. There it stood in the broad field, a great floating house. And the people came and wondered, and said, "Where is the water to float it? What a joke!"

Then I began to gather into the field the animals that were to go with us in the ark. Of clean animals, such as the sheep and the cow, I took seven pairs of each; and of unclean, such as the lion and the tiger, I took one pair of each, of the things that creep upon the ground, one pair of each; and of the birds of the air, seven pairs of each.

When the people saw the animals assembled in the great field about the ark, their amazement knew no bounds.

"Was ever such a thing heard of?" they cried. "The old man has gone mad, and his sons with him!"

But I was so sorry for them that I went among them and warned them again and again to repent and turn from their folly

and wickedness, but they would not heed and cried out that the folly and wickedness was mine. They brought their heathen priests to reason with me, but the priests were worse than their people—the blind leading the blind to destruction.

At last all was ready; the ark was finished, the beasts and birds were gathered, and food for all was stored. As God had commanded me, so I had done.

Then, as I lay awake in the night, God spoke to me and said, "Noah."

"Here am I, Lord," I replied.

"You only have I seen righteous in all the earth. Come, you and yours, into the ark. For after seven days I will cause it to rain forty days and forty nights; and every living thing will I destroy from off the face of the earth."

I slept no more, but lay all night trembling to think of the terror of the foolish people when my words should come true; but who was I, to question the wisdom of the Creator?

As soon as the morning was light, I called my sons and told them of God's command. Then we began to load the ship. All day long the animals passed into the ark. Two by two, male and female, side by side they walked, as if they knew their safety hung upon it. Even the wild brutes were tame and obedient to our word. The elephant, the lion, the tiger, the leopard, the camel, the cow, the sheep, the deer, the antelope, all went in and took their places in the stalls provided for them; and the smaller brutes and creeping things passed into their holes and dens. Then the birds, which were flying about in the sun, came at our call, and sweeping low, flew in at the door, two by two, and took their places in their nests.

For seven days we loaded the ship, and all the while the sun shone, the earth was dry, and there was no sign of rain. All the while the doomed people stood about, watching us. Some grew angry and called us vile names, and others mocked, but none would believe. And still we worked, unmindful of their anger

and their mirth, until on the seventh day we placed our families in their cabins, and all was done.

Then, as the sun was going down, my three sons went aboard. I walked around the ship for the last time, and examined it as a good captain should, to see that all was safe and right. All was done as God had commanded.

The time had now come. I saw that the sky was growing black and the wind was rising. I pointed up, but the crowd only laughed, and one cried, "It's only a shower!" Their taunts and jeers followed me as I went aboard, and I wept for very sorrow to think what was about to come upon them. The moment I stepped inside, the door was closed by unseen hands. The Lord had shut us in.

The Coming of the Flood

As the darkness fell, we sat awed and silent, awaiting what should come. Then the rain began to beat upon the roof, and the wind arose and struck the ark with such a mighty blast that she rocked upon her keel. But we were not afraid; we knew that we were safe in the hand that had planned our refuge.

The storm grew apace; the thunders roared, and the lightnings flashed and lit up all the ark with an unearthly light. The beasts called to each other from their stalls, and the birds fluttered in their nests; but neither beast nor bird was frightened, for they knew they were safe from the wrath of the storm.

Then the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fell in sheets and torrents and floods, so that it seemed as if the roof of the ark must be beaten in—but it held fast. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters came rolling in from the sea across the land. We felt the waves flowing fast under our keel—and then the ark quivered and lifted. Slowly and evenly she rose upon the waters and floated like a thing of life.

"Truly," I said, "the hand of God is upon the earth."

I thought of the terror of those who had mocked God. Now

they were praying for safety, when it was too late. As I peered through the darkness, I thought I could almost see them climbing to the tops of their houses as they rocked upon their foundations, then tottered and fell; climbing the trees, the hills, the mountains, as the fatal waters rose up and up their sides after them—until I could bear the thought no longer, and I prayed for their souls.

Then a quietness came upon me; and I took a light and examined the roof, and went down into the lower stories to see if the bottom was safe. The inside was as dry as the palm of my hand. There was no drop of moisture anywhere. Our gallant ship held tight and strong. I spoke to the beasts in their stalls as they munched their food. Even the wildest looked at me with friendly eyes as I comforted them. After this, I returned to my family, and we sat and talked.

Lest men should forget, I marked the date of our entering the ark. It was in the six hundredth year of my life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, that the great deluge began. For forty days and forty nights, as God had said, the rain descended and the waters rose higher and higher upon the earth, until all the hills and the high mountains were covered, and every living thing upon the earth, both man and beast, perished. Only the fish in the sea remained alive.

Day by day we fed the beasts and birds their appointed food, which we had stored for them, so that none suffered from hunger; day by day the rain kept on falling.

So forty days passed, and on the fortieth day God sent a great wind to blow over the earth; the windows of heaven were stopped and the rain was over, but the waters covered the earth for yet another hundred and fifty days.

The Going Down of the Waters

Then slowly but surely the waters began to sink. Meanwhile, the ark floated wherever the waters carried it, for it was without sail or rudder; and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day

of the month it rested on the highest mountains of that country—the mountains of Ar-a-rat. How glad we were to feel the ark safe on solid ground once more!

The waters kept going down by degrees until the first day of the tenth month, and on that day the tops of the neighboring mountains began to be seen.

I waited forty days longer, and then opened a window and sent forth a raven; the raven flew to and fro for a time, and then sped away and did not return.

Then I sent forth another messenger, a dove; she flew about and, finding no rest for the sole of her foot, came back frightened to the window. I reached out my hand and took her into the ark, and glad enough she was to fly back to her old nest.

After waiting seven days longer I sent the dove out again, and lo, toward evening she flew back with an olive leaf in her mouth. So I knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

I waited another seven days and sent out the dove once more, and this time she did not return. So we removed the covering from the ark and looked out, and saw that the ground was dry.

Even then we waited for God's command, and it was eight weeks before God spoke to me and said, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and their wives, and bring every living thing with you."

So we all disembarked from our floating home, on which we had lived for more than a year. After all were safely landed, my first act was to build an altar, and offer a burnt offering.

The offering was very pleasing to the Lord, and he said:

"I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; neither will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

We bowed ourselves to the ground before the Lord, as he went on speaking:

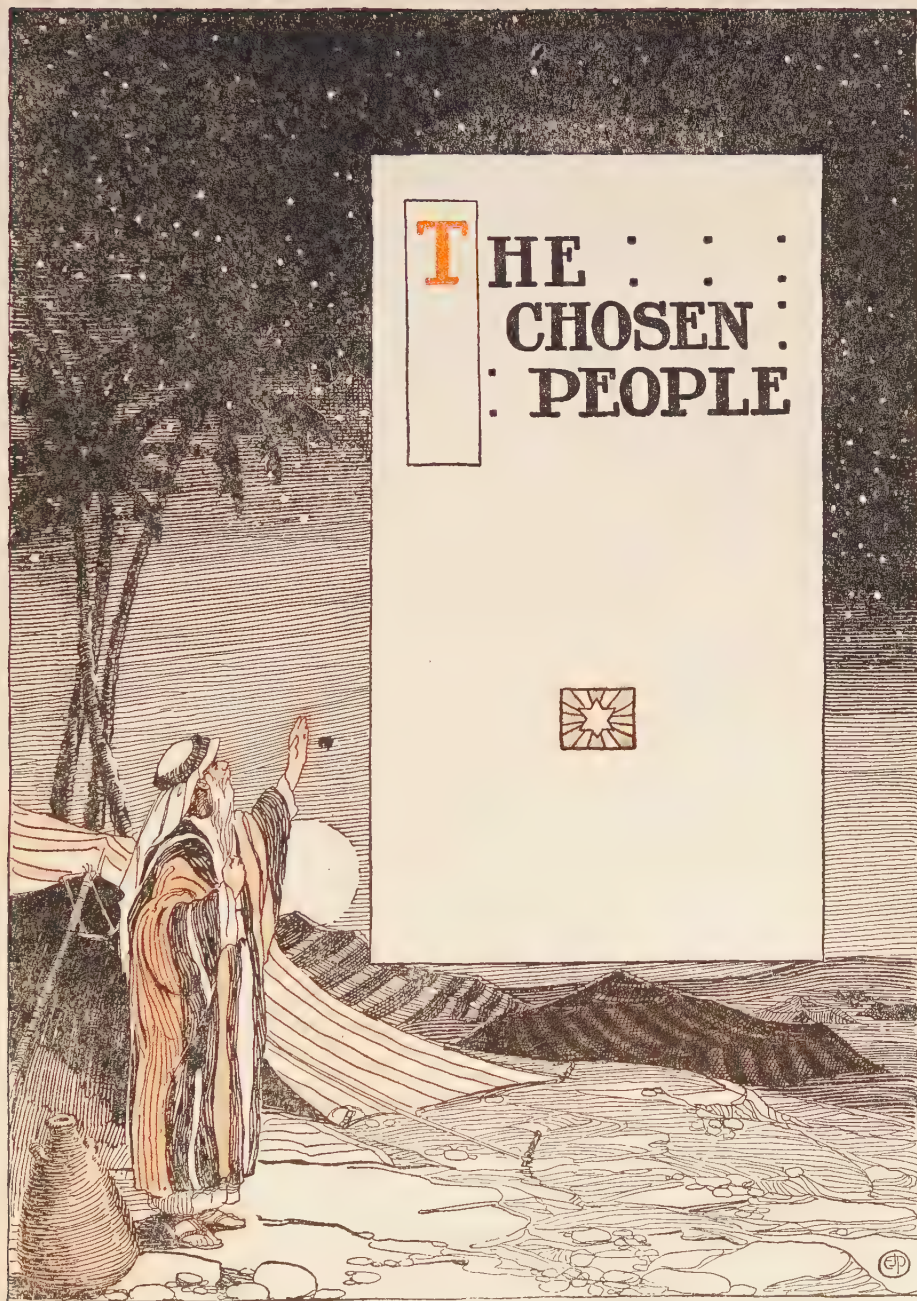
"I will set my rainbow in the cloud, as a sign. When you see a cloud, and the rainbow in the cloud, you may know that I remember my promise that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy the earth."

Whenever we saw the beautiful arch span the sky after a storm, we knew that God was keeping his promise.

* * * * *

The brother and sister read to the end, and wished the story had been longer. Soon after, they took their lamps, kissed their aunt good-night, and went upstairs to bed. Billy fell asleep and dreamed that great waves of water were rolling under his bed; in the morning he awoke with a start—but there were no waves. Only the wind was whistling about the gables of the old house, and through the window he saw the sun shining brightly on a white blanket of snow.

THE : : :
CHOSEN :
: PEOPLE



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

“I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—GENESIS 12 : 2, 3.



"LET ME, I PRAY YOU, DRINK A LITTLE WATER FROM YOUR PITCHER"

IV

THE CHOSEN FAMILY

THE next evening when the children finished telling their aunt what they had learned about Noah the ship-builder, the old lady sat quiet for several minutes. At length she spoke.

"Children," she said, "you amaze me with the way you tell these Bible stories. Not only do you know the order of events, but you make the people so real that they seem to live. While you were talking, I could see, in my mind's eye, a picture of what happened, better than I ever saw it before—and I have told that story over and over again."

The old lady went on, "Keep all of these stories in mind, and read them again and again; and some day, when you are grown, tell them to children. You make the people of ages past seem to live in the present; and that is a wonderful gift.

"Why, I could almost hear the builders working on that

ship," she continued; "and I could almost see the animals and birds taking their places when it was ready."

The children hardly knew what reply to make to such praise, so Mary Frances asked what story they should read next.

"The story of the man who left his home at God's command, and went into a far country," replied her aunt.

"Oh, Aunty, won't you tell us that one?" asked Mary Frances. Much pleased, the old lady began the story of Abram.

* * * * *

Abram, the Friend of God

To be called "The Friend of God" is a very great honor. There is only one greater title—but that is a story to be told later. This title did not come to Abram easily; he won it only after many strange and dangerous adventures.

Abram was a true child of the out-of-doors, born in the tent of his father, Te-rah, a wandering shepherd chief. The land of his birth was a land of idols in southern Asia, where the great river Eu-phra-tes flows into the Persian Gulf. The people of that land bowed down to rude images of brass and wood and stone. Some of them even worshiped the moon.

Abram looked at the people about him worshiping their foolish idols, sometimes even making human sacrifices, and he said to himself, "Come what will, I will never worship them." And he never did.

One day, after he was grown up, his father said, "I have heard of a wonderful land on the other side of the Great Desert, where there are green pastures and plenty of water for our flocks; let us seek it."

Now this desert was the Arabian Desert, which they could not cross with their cattle, because its sands were hot and dry. The only way to reach the other side was to go around it.

Striking their tents, and driving their flocks and herds before them, they set out on their long and dangerous journey. They

wandered slowly along the banks of the great river, until at last they came to the hill country in the north where the river rises, and there they pitched their tents at a place called Haran. With Abram and his father were Abram's beautiful young wife Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, who accompanied him to Canaan.

But Abram's father was never to see the land of Canaan. While they were encamped at Haran, the brave old man died, at the age of two hundred and five, and his son became chief in his place. Abram was now seventy-five years old, still a young man for those days.

God's Promise

Soon after his father's death came the great event of Abram's life—God spoke to him. He lay one night sleepless in his tent, his mind troubled and full of foreboding, thinking of his father and his distant home, when he heard a voice. Such a voice he had never heard before, but he recognized it. It was the voice he had so often wished to hear, so he was not afraid.

"Abram," the voice called.

"Here am I, Lord," he answered.

"Go out from this country, leave your people and the land of your fathers, and go to a land that I will show you."

Such was the startling message.

"I will make of your family a great nation," the voice went on; "and I will bless you and make your name great; you shall be a blessing to others, and through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

At last Abram's trust was rewarded; his fear vanished. Now he knew there was one true God, for had not God spoken to him?

He lost no time in setting out on his great adventure. He quickly broke up his camp, struck his tents, gathered his flocks and herds, and went forth, not knowing where he was going.

He was on his way to the Promised Land, but he did not

know that. He only knew that God would guide him, and that was enough.

The great caravan headed by Abram and Lot first traveled west and then south, slowly, because of the cattle. After a time they came to a place called Shechem, and encamped under a great oak tree. There were wild Arab tribes about who looked at them curiously, but did not molest them.

Here the Lord appeared to Abram a second time, and said, "Unto your children will I give this land."

So the land was called the Promised Land, because God promised it to Abram and his children after him. There he built an altar under the oak tree, and worshiped the true God who had appeared to him.

Abram never doubted God's word, and when he was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him again.

Abram was overcome, and fell on his face. And God talked with him, and comforted him, saying, "You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be A-bra-ham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made you. As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her, and she shall have a son, and she shall be a mother of nations."

The Offering of Isaac

Soon after this event, Abraham and Sarah moved from Hebron, and pitched their tents at Gerar, and there Isaac their son was born, as God had promised.

Isaac grew up to young manhood, an obedient, gentle lad devoted to his father and mother. His education was that of a young chief, living in the open. Of books there were none, but in the care of flocks and herds he became an expert. In the quiet evening he sat in the tent door with his parents, and listened to

the thrilling tales his father told of his travels and adventures since leaving his early home in far-off Babylonia.

Then one day came the great test of Abraham's life, which was to prove for all time that the old chief was rightly named "The Friend of God."

In the night he heard the voice of which he was no longer afraid, and which he loved so well, the voice of his Great Friend.

"Abraham," came the call.

"Here am I, Lord," he answered.

Then came the most startling command that had ever been given to man, a command that even Abraham could not understand, so hard was the task it set him.

"Take now your son," the voice said, "your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go up into the land of Mo-ri-ah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will show you."

Abraham would willingly have sacrificed his own life for his son—but Isaac! He did not understand. All night long he tossed upon his couch; and then he remembered his own words to his Great Friend, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And he said, "He will do right; I must obey."

At the morning light the loyal old chief arose, and saddled his beast; called two of his young men to accompany him, and Isaac, his son. He cut the wood for the burnt offering, took provisions for the journey, and set out for the place of which God had told him. He did not—he dared not—tell Sarah his errand.

Over the hills they went, and on the third day they saw the mountains afar off, and soon arrived at the foot of Mount Moriah.

"Remain here with the beast, and I and the lad will go up into the mountain to worship, and come again to you," Abraham said to the two young men.

He had scarcely slept for worry on the journey, and yet there kept ringing in his ears the question, "Shall not the Judge of all

the earth do right?" and the comforting answer came as often as the question, "He is my Friend. He cannot do wrong."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac; and he took in his hand the fire he had prepared, and the knife; and they went side by side up the mountain.

"Father!" said Isaac.

Abraham was so startled at the word that he almost dropped the fire.

"Here am I, my son," he said.

"Father," said Isaac, "see, here is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham had said nothing to Isaac of what he was about to do.

"God himself will provide a lamb for the burnt offering, my son," was all the reply he could make.

So they climbed slowly, until they came to the place that God had pointed out.

There Abraham built the altar, and laid the wood in order upon it—moving like a man in a dream, while Isaac stood silently by, watching him. The old chief looked about him, but there was no sign.

He waited a minute longer, but still there was no sign. With the tears running down his face, he threw his arms about the lad, and told him gently what he was commanded to do. Isaac was startled—who would not be?—but he did not resist. He had never learned how to disobey; his father's word was law.

The old man bound him gently as he lay upon the altar. Then he bent over and kissed him, and his tears fell upon Isaac's face. Then he stretched out his hand, and picked up the knife to slay his son.

He was about to lift the knife, when—

"Abraham! Abraham!" Quick and sharp the words were spoken. It was the voice of the Angel of the Lord calling to him.

"Here am I," Abraham cried, in sudden hope.

"Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do anything to



"LAY NOT YOUR HAND UPON THE LAD"

(41)

him: for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

Then in a frenzy of joy, Abraham cut with the hated knife the thongs that bound Isaac, and lifting him up, embraced him, this time with tears of relief and happiness.

After a moment he heard a noise behind him, and there in the thicket he saw a ram caught by his horns. Abraham quickly caught the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

"The name of this place shall be Jehovah-jireh," (Jehovah will provide) Abraham cried.

Now for the second time, the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven, and said, "By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your people as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your people shall possess the gate of their enemies; and in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice."

Thus the friendship of Abraham with God was sealed forever. Together father and son went happily down the mountain, and returned to the young men, and they packed up and went home to Gerar.

But, so far as the story goes, Abraham never told Sarah, nor did Isaac ever tell his mother, what happened on the top of Mount Moriah.

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"You have become so interested in the story of this boy Isaac, my dear children," added the old lady, "that I want you to learn his love story. After you have read it in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, you may read it in Uncle Ben's book." Abraham was afraid to let Isaac, who was his only son, go on a long journey to find a wife, so he sent his steward instead. Uncle

Ben lets the steward tell how he found Rebekah. Suppose you read it together and tell me about it to-morrow."

This is the steward's story, as Mary Frances read it aloud from the quaint old book.

The Courtship of Isaac and Rebekah

When Isaac's mother, Sarah, died in her tent under the great oaks at Hebron, she had lived one hundred twenty-seven years. The old chief and his son buried her in the cave of Mach-pe-lah, a beautiful shaded spot near by.

After that, the two men were very lonely, and drew nearer to each other in their grief. Sarah was a very lovely woman, famous for her beauty, which she never lost, even in old age. Isaac was her only child; they were devoted to each other, and she could hardly bear him out of her sight. When not busy with his father's great flocks and herds, he was her constant companion, and always lived in her tent.

Father and son often sat together in their tent door in the long evenings and talked over the future.

"I came to this land as a stranger, and I am still a stranger," the old man would say. "I have grown very rich in cattle and gold and silver, and it will all be yours when I am gone."

"I hope you will live a long time yet, father," Isaac would reply.

"No, my son, I cannot live long. You must seek a wife, but she cannot be from the heathen tribes round about us. Your mother and I left the far-off land of our birth to escape idolatry, and to seek the true God, and here we found him. He is your God, too."

Thus they talked evening after evening, and so the time went by.

Then one day the caravan of an Arab chief on his way from the North to Egypt halted at their tent door, and Abraham,

according to his custom, invited him to lodge for the night, and gave him water from his well and food for his camels.

Now the Arab chief had come through Pad-an-A-ram, Abraham's former home, and he told him the news of his family, and mentioned a daughter of the house, a beautiful girl, whom he had seen there. That was enough for Isaac; he could scarcely wait until the caravan had gone on its journey.

"Father," he said the next day, "let me go to see her."

His father understood, for he had been thinking the same thought.

"No, my son, that cannot be," and the old man shook his head. "You cannot leave this land which God has promised us. The journey is long and perilous, and harm might befall you, and I might die while you were away."

For the first time in his life, Isaac was tempted to rebel, but he waited.

"Son," said his father, "you are all I have. You must stay with me; there is nothing to do but to send a messenger."

So the old chief, who was a man of action, called me, his chief steward and oldest servant, into council. I often sat with them of an evening, and already I had guessed what was coming.

"Put your hand under my thigh, I pray you," he bade me.

This was the quaint way of taking an oath in those days.

"Now swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth," said the old chief solemnly to me, "that you will not seek a wife for my son from the daughters of the heathen among whom we dwell, but that you will go to my country, and to my people, and seek a wife for my son Isaac."

"Perhaps the woman will not be willing to come with me," I objected. "Shall I not then take your son to the land from which you came?"

"No," said Abraham, sternly, "you shall not take my son there. The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to

me, and swore to me, saying, 'To your son will I give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from thence. If the woman be not willing to follow you, then you shall be free from your oath; only you must not take my son there."

Then I put my hand under the thigh of my master, and swore to do as he bade me.

Without loss of time, Isaac and I went among the camels and chose the finest of the herd to form the caravan. Then I selected the best drivers to accompany me, and there was a great stir in the camp. At last all was ready. Isaac decked the camels in their gay trappings, gave me beautiful jewelry from his mother's store, and costly gifts for the maiden's family; and the caravan set off on its happy adventure. Isaac accompanied it part way, and gave me secret instructions. I laughed, and nodded that I understood, while Isaac stood alone in the fields and longingly watched the brave array until the last camel was out of sight.

Then he returned to his tent to wait; for, with the utmost speed, it would be several weeks before we could return from Padan-Aram.

Day by day the caravan sped north by the old trail over which Abraham had driven his cattle more than sixty years before, and came at last to Padan-Aram, the city of Na-hor. It was evening when we reached the well outside the city, about the time when the women came to draw water.

I made the camels kneel down, and waited to see what would happen. Then, becoming anxious for the success of my delicate errand, I bowed my head and prayed.

"O Lord, the God of my master Abraham," I prayed, "send me good speed to-day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass, that the maid to whom I shall say, 'Let down your pitcher, I pray you, that I may drink,' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give

your camels drink also': let the same be the maid chosen for my master Isaac."

As I opened my eyes, almost before I had done speaking, I saw a young girl coming toward me, who was very fair to look upon.

I watched her respectfully as she went to the well, filled her pitcher, and put it on her shoulder. Then I ran to her, and said, "Let me, I pray you, drink a little water from your pitcher."

"Drink, my lord," she said, quickly lifting down her pitcher upon her hand and holding it for me to drink.

"I will draw for your camels also, until they have done drinking," she added.

Now it is no small task to water ten thirsty camels, but she hasted and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran to the well and drew, and poured the water into the trough for all the camels as their drivers led them up.

I stood by silently looking on, wondering whether the Lord had made my journey prosperous or not.

When the camels had done drinking, I took from my saddlebags a golden ring and two golden bracelets, and said, "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, I pray, is there room in your father's house to lodge us?"

She smiled at me, and I thought I had never seen so sweet a smile.

"I am the daughter of Beth-u-el," she replied, "My grandmother was Mil-cah, and my grandfather, Na-hor." Then she added, "We have both straw and food enough, and there is room to lodge in."

Then I gave her the ring and bracelets; and bowed my head and worshiped the Lord.

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham," I said, "who has not forsaken his mercy and his truth toward my master."

Then Re-bek-ah, for that was the girl's name, left her pitcher,

and ran home and told her mother what I had said, and showed her the ring and the bracelets.

Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was La-ban; and when Laban heard, he ran out to me where I stood by the camels at the well.

"Come in, blessed of the Lord," he said. "Why do you stand outside? I have prepared the house, and have room for the camels."

So I went into the house, and Laban gave me water to wash my feet, and the feet of the men that were with me, and he unharnessed the camels and gave them straw and fodder.

Then they set food before me, but I looked around at the family, and said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand."

"Speak on," they said.

"I am Abraham's steward," I told them. "The Lord has blessed my master greatly; he has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men servants, and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, had a son when she was old, and to him he has given all that he possesses."

Then I told what my master had ordered me to do, and of the oath he had made me take before setting out on my errand.

Then I told what had happened at the well on my arrival.

"So I put the ring on Rebekah's forehead, and the bracelets on her hands," I said, "and I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, who had led me in the right way to find a wife for my master's son. Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may know what to do."

"The thing proceeds from the Lord," answered both Bethuel and Laban; "we cannot speak either good or ill. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the Lord has spoken."

All the while Rebekah stood by blushing in confusion, as she listened to this strange and sudden proposal; but she said nothing.

A few hours before, she had never so much as heard of the rich young chief, and now I stood before her as his ambassador and calmly asked permission to carry her off to be his bride.

At the words of the two men, I bowed to the earth, giving thanks to the Lord. Then going to my saddle bags, I brought forth the jewels of silver, and the jewels of gold, and the fine clothing, that Isaac had sent, and gave them to Rebekah. I also gave presents to her mother and to her brother Laban.

This done, my men and I sat down to eat and drink, and we tarried all night.

In the morning I rose up early, and said, "Send me away to my master."

But Rebekah's mother and brother objected, and said, "Let the girl abide with us a few days, at the least, ten; and after that she shall go."

But I was impatient; I was thinking of Isaac, who was anxiously awaiting my return.

"Do not hinder me," I said, "seeing that the Lord has prospered my way; send me away, that I may return to my master."

"We will call the girl, and let her decide for herself," they said.

So they called Rebekah, and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," Rebekah replied.

"Make ready the camels," I ordered my men.

In a very short time Rebekah was ready, and they put her and her nurse and her maidservants upon the camels, and bade her good-by.

"Be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your children possess the gates of them that hate them," they called after her, as we rode away.

Swiftly as the caravan had traveled north, it traveled still more swiftly on the return journey, for was I not bearing home a bride for my beloved young chief? When we halted for the night,

I sang the praises of my master in the willing ears of the maid. How handsome he was—how kind—how brave!

What was Isaac doing all this time? Every evening he wandered pensively in the fields over which he knew the caravan must come, and watched the distant horizon until the darkness shut the line of the sky from his sight.

Then one day which he never forgot, he lifted up his eyes and looked—and there were our camels coming as fast as they could trot.

Isaac ran toward us, and Rebekah lifted her eyes and saw him running, as I halted the caravan.

“What man is this who comes to meet us?” she asked me as I helped her to alight.

“It is my master,” I answered.

Rebekah took one glance and dropped her veil over her face.

Isaac saw her face before she did so, and he loved her. It was love at first sight—and always, until death parted them.

Then Isaac took Rebekah by the hand and brought her into his mother’s tent, and presented her to his father.



HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE JACOB BECAUSE HIS HANDS WERE HAIRY LIKE HIS BROTHER
ESAU'S

V

THE TWO BROTHERS

“MY dear, how did you ever learn that tale so well?” exclaimed Aunt Maria, as Mary Frances finished telling of the courtship of Isaac and Rebekah, with here and there a word of prompting from her brother. “I am almost tempted to let you two read the next story together; but no—it is a long story, and I think I should tell it to you myself.”

So the children settled themselves comfortably, Mary Frances in her rocking chair and Billy on the floor, and the old lady began the story of *The Two Brothers*.

* * * * *

Esau Sells His Birthright

When Abraham died at the age of one hundred seventy-five, he left his wealth to his son Isaac as his birthright. So Isaac

became a great chief, the richest in the Land of Promise, and also the head of the Chosen Family.

For a long time Rebekah had no children; and then twins were born, two boys, Esau and Jacob.

Now Esau happened to be the older by a few minutes; and therefore, by right of birth, became his father's heir, for that was the custom of the East.

The two boys were so unlike that no one would ever have guessed that they were twins. Esau was red and freckled; the hair on his body was red, and there was a great mop of red hair on his head. Jacob's body was fair and smooth.

As the boys grew, the difference became more marked. Esau loved to hunt, and spent all his time roaming the plains and hills hunting game with bow and arrow. Jacob was a home boy who loved the tents, and the flocks and herds. Esau was a mighty hunter, Jacob a shepherd.

Well, Isaac loved Esau, who shot the wild deer and brought the choicest bits of venison home to his father; and Rebekah loved the home-staying Jacob, who was always at hand to run her errands and to wait upon her.

Late one afternoon, Esau came in from the chase; he had been out hunting since daylight, and he was ravenously hungry.

Now Jacob was cooking a dish of pottage made of red lentils—a kind of bean growing in that country.

"Give me, I pray you, some of that red pottage, for I am fainting with hunger," Esau cried, trying to reach for it.

"Sell me this day your birthright," said Jacob, drawing back, seeing a chance to make a bargain with his reckless brother.

"See, I am dying of hunger," cried Esau. "What good will my birthright do me?"

"Swear to sell it to me this day," said the wily Jacob.

"I swear; give me the pottage," cried the hungry Esau; and so he sold his birthright to his younger brother.

Then Jacob gave Esau all the bread and pottage he could eat,

and Esau ate and drank till he could eat no more, and went away.

Jacob probably excused his meanness by saying to himself, "Oh, well, he despised his birthright, so why shouldn't I take it?"

Soon after this, there was a famine in the land, and Isaac planned to go south to escape it; but the Lord appeared to him, and forbade him.

"Go not down into Egypt," he said. "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and bless you; for to you and to your children I will give all these lands, and I will keep the promise that I made to Abraham your father; and I will multiply your family as the stars of heaven; and in your family shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my commandments."

Now that promise and that blessing were a part of Esau's birthright, which he foolishly forfeited. Perhaps he did not know, nor care; but did Jacob know?

To make matters worse, Esau followed the custom of the East, and married two wives from a heathen tribe. This was a great grief to his father and mother, who wished their sons to marry only believers in the one true God.

But even that did not excuse Jacob.

The Stolen Blessing

As Isaac grew older his eyes became dim, so that he was nearly blind, as often happens in the sunny lands of the East.

One day he called his elder son, and said to him, "Esau, my son."

"Here am I," Esau replied.

"See," he said, "I am old, I do not know the day of my death. Now, therefore, take your bow and arrows, and go out into the fields, and hunt me venison, and make me a savory dish, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless you before I die."

Now his father's last blessing was a part of Esau's birthright. Jacob had not told his father what he had done to Esau, but it is likely he had told his mother. Esau, too, kept still, and went off on his hunt.

Now Rebekah heard within the tent what Isaac had said to Esau. Then she did a thing that she must have been sorry for to the day of her death.

She slipped out and found her favorite, Jacob, and whispered to him in great excitement.

"Listen, my son," she said, "I heard your father say to Esau, 'Bring me venison, and make me a savory dish, that I may eat, and bless you before I die.' Now, therefore, my son, do as I tell you. Go to the flock and fetch me two kids of the goats; and I will make a savory dish for your father, such as he loves; and you shall take it to him that he may eat, and bless you before his death."

"But, mother," said Jacob, "Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will touch me. Then I shall seem to him a deceiver, and bring a curse upon myself, instead of a blessing."

"Upon me be the curse, my son," said his mother; "only obey my word, and go fetch the goats."

So Jacob did as he was told, and brought them to his mother; and his mother cooked them and made a savory dish, such as his father loved.

When that was done she took Esau's best clothes, and made Jacob put them on. Then she took the hairy skins of the goats, and fastened them on his arms and hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.

Then she put the dish of meat and the bread that she had prepared into Jacob's hands, and whispered, "Go, my son, and pretend that you are Esau."

Jacob's heart beat fast, and his hands shook so that he almost dropped the dish, as he entered his father's tent.

"My father," he mumbled.

"Here am I. Who are you, my son?" asked the nearly blind old man.

"I am Esau, your first-born," said Jacob; "I have done as you told me. Sit, I pray you, and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me."

"How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" asked Isaac.

"Because the Lord your God sent me good speed," he said, mumbling again.

"Come near, I pray you, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are my very son Esau or not," said the old man.

Jacob went close to his father.

"The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are the hands of Esau," Isaac said in a puzzled tone, as he ran his fingers over Jacob's neck and arms.

He did not recognize Jacob because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's. But still he was not quite satisfied.

"Are you my very son Esau?" he asked, doubtfully.

"I am," said Jacob.

"Bring the dish near to me," his father said; "and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless him."

Jacob placed the food before his father and brought him wine.

While all this was going on, Rebekah stood near by, her heart beating so loud that she feared her husband might hear it.

"Come near now, and kiss me, my son," said the old chief, when he had done eating.

Jacob came near, and kissed him. Isaac smelled the smell of Esau's clothing, and blessed Jacob, and said:

"See, the smell of my son
Is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed:
And God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of corn and wine:

Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you:
Be lord over your brethren,
And let your mother's sons bow down to you:
Cursed be every one that curses you,
And blessed be every one that blesses you."

As soon as Isaac made an end of blessing Jacob, Jacob seized the dish and slipped out of the tent, followed by his mother. He quickly ran into his mother's tent, threw off Esau's clothing and put on his own. Then he looked out, and there was Esau, swinging across the field from his hunting, a young deer thrown over his shoulder.

Ignorant of what had happened while he was absent, Esau also made savory meat, and carried the dish into his father's tent, where the old chief sat with bowed head, deep in thought.

"Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that his soul may bless me," he cried, in his hearty voice.

"Who are you?" asked the startled old chief.

"I am your son, your first-born, Esau," he replied, in surprise.

Then Isaac trembled exceedingly. "Who then is he that has taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before you came, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed," he added, in a quavering voice.

When Esau heard these words, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and the two guilty ones in the neighboring tent heard it.

"Bless me, even me also, O my father," he cried.

"Your brother came with craft, and stole away your blessing," said Isaac in sorrow and anger.

"He is rightly named Jacob, the deceiver, for he has deceived me twice: he took away my birthright, and now he steals my blessing," cried Esau. "Have you not reserved a blessing for me, O my father?"

"See, I have made him lord over you and all his brothers,"

the old chief answered; "and with corn and wine have I sustained him; what then shall I do for you, my son?"

"Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father."

Esau lifted up his voice and wept; and again the two guilty ones in the next tent heard him.

Then Isaac his father answered sorrowfully, and said:

"Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above;
And by the sword shall you live,
And you shall serve your brother;
And it shall come to pass when you shall break loose,
That you shall shake his yoke from off your neck."

With that Esau had to be content.

The Flight of Jacob

Esau had little liking for Jacob even before he stole his father's blessing, and now his dislike turned to hate.

"When my father dies," he said in his heart, "I will kill Jacob."

What he said in his heart, he soon said out loud, as often happens; and his threat came to Rebekah's ears.

She was frightened, as well she might be, for who could foretell what the reckless Esau would do?

"Listen, Jacob," she whispered, "your brother is very angry, and boasts that he will kill you. Now do as I say. Rise up and fly to my brother Laban in Haran; and stay with him a few days, until your brother's anger turns away, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you to return home. Why should I lose you both in one day?"

This frightened Jacob, too, so that he was glad enough to go to Haran, or anywhere else, to get away from the angry Esau. His mother dared not tell Isaac of Esau's threat, so she thought of a scheme.

"I am worried," she kept saying to her husband. "If Jacob marries one of these heathen girls, as Esau has done, what good will my life do me?"

Now Isaac was no more pleased with Esau's heathen wives than Rebekah, so he agreed.

"Jacob, you shall not marry a wife of the heathen," he charged him. "Arise, go to your mother's brother Laban in Haran, and take a wife from his family."

Then, little as Jacob deserved it, the good old man gave him his blessing.

Now that he had his father's permission to go, he was anxious to be off. His mother packed his bundle that night, and waking him early the next morning, gave him his breakfast and kissed him good-by.

"Esau will soon forget," she said, "and then you can come home with your new wife."

His mother watched him till he was out of sight; then she went into her tent, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Esau will soon forget," she kept repeating, "and my son will come home."

But Esau did not forget. Jacob did not come home for many a long year, and Rebekah never saw her favorite son again.

On and on he ran, over hill and plain, keeping north toward Haran, looking back from time to time to see if Esau was pursuing. Only his fears pursued him, however.

There he was, a fugitive, all his wealth a bundle of clothes and food, and a staff. He had never before been more than a few miles from home, and now he was setting out afoot on a long journey to a strange country.

As the day wore on, and he saw that Esau was not pursuing, he slowed his pace, but he did not stop. At last, as the sun went down, he came to a lonely spot, a hollow in the hills. Broad sheets of bare rock covered the slopes, and loose stones were scattered over the ground. Here he rested for the night.

The Angels' Ladder

Jacob was alone in a strange country, many miles from his mother's tent. He sat down on a stone and ate his supper hungrily. Then he set the stone for a pillow as comfortably as he could, and lay down to sleep, his staff by his side.

He had never been so tired, and with a homesick longing for his mother, he fell into a sound sleep.

But the weary runaway was not to sleep long, for here in this desolate spot he was to meet with the strangest adventure of his strange life.

As he lay there on the bare ground, he dreamed a wonderful dream. He thought he lay at the foot of a great ladder, a broad staircase that sloped gently up from the earth.

Slowly he gazed up and up, to where the top reached to heaven. He could not move, but just lay there and looked; bright forms were going up and down on it, the angels of God. And, behold, the Lord stood at the top, and a voice came down to Jacob.

"I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac your father: the land whereon you are lying, to you will I give it, and to your children. They shall be as the dust of the earth, and shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in you and in your children shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

"And, behold, I am with you," the voice went on; "and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken."

The voice ceased, and the sleeper awoke out of his sleep, and opened his eyes.

"Surely the Lord is in this place," he whispered, "and I did not know it."

Then he shivered, and was afraid; there were the cold stones, and the darkness—nothing more.

"How dreadful this place is!" he said.

Then he remembered the bright vision, and added, "This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

All the rest of that night, Jacob lay tossing on his hard bed, half asleep and half awake.

Early in the morning he arose and looked about him; all was as when he lay down; nothing was changed, but he was no longer afraid.

He looked at the stone that had served as a pillow; he set it up on end like a pillar, and poured a little of the oil his mother had given him on the top of it, and he said, "The name of this place is Beth-el, the house of God."

Then Jacob laid his hand upon the pillar and vowed a vow, which he never afterward forgot.

"If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothing to wear, and bring me again to my father's tent in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that he shall give me I will surely give a tenth to him."

Jacob Meets Rachel

This duty being done, Jacob ate his breakfast, and set out on his long journey north with new courage in his heart. Past Da-mas-cus, past the Leb-a-non mountains, on and on he went, toiling slowly on foot, sleeping wherever night overtook him.

He remembered how his mother, as she had often told him, had come riding over this trail on a swift camel to her lover, years before.

After many weary days he reached the land of his mother's people. Then, one afternoon, he came to a well, covered by a great, round stone. Three flocks of sheep lay beside it, waiting to be watered.

"Where are you from?" Jacob asked the shepherds.

"Of Haran are we," they said.

“Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?” he asked.

“We know him,” was the reply.

“Is it well with him?”

“It is well,” they said; “and here comes Ra-chel, his daughter, with the sheep.”

Jacob looked up, and there was a beautiful girl coming toward the well, just as his mother had done many years before. His father had sent a train of ten camels, laden with costly gifts, to meet Rebekah; their son stood before Rachel, a poor, friendless runaway from home.

Even before Rachel reached him he fell in love with her. Without waiting for the help of the lazy shepherds, he grasped the stone, exerted his great strength, and rolled it from the well's mouth, and helped her water her sheep.

Then, scarcely knowing what he did, he kissed her, and broke into tears; for she was the first of his family that he had seen in his long weary march. Then he told the surprised girl that he was Rebekah's son.

She ran home quickly and told her father the tidings; and Laban came out in haste, embraced him, and brought him into the house.

He told Laban all the news of his mother and father, but he did not tell him the real reason for his leaving home.

“Surely you are my bone and my flesh,” cried his uncle in welcome.

There was nothing that Jacob did not know about the care of flocks and herds, and Laban soon found him a very willing helper.

“Even if you are my nephew, why should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” Laban said to him, after a month had passed.

Now Laban had two daughters, Leah, the older, who was not particularly good-looking, and Rachel, the younger, who was very beautiful indeed.

"I will serve you seven years for Rachel," Jacob promptly replied to Laban's question.

"It is better that I give her to you than to another man," said Laban; "stay with me."

Jacob served Laban faithfully seven years for Rachel; but it seemed to him that the seven years were only a few days, so great was his love for her.

"Give me my wife, according to our agreement," said Jacob to Laban at the end of the seventh year.

"Very well," said Laban.

Now Laban was a hard man. With Jacob's skill he was growing rich, and he had no mind to lose his daughter and as good a shepherd as Jacob at the same time.

So what did he do but gather all the men of the place to a great marriage feast. How he got Rachel out of the way, the story does not tell; perhaps he locked her up.

Then he had Leah, who was very fond of Jacob, dress in Rachel's clothes, and put on the thick wedding veil such as brides wear in that country, and he married Leah to the unsuspecting Jacob.

When the happy bridegroom lifted Leah's veil, he saw at a glance what his father-in-law had done, and he was very, very angry and heartbroken.

"What is this that you have done to me?" cried Jacob in his rage. "Did I not serve seven years for Rachel? Why have you cheated me?"

"Not so fast, Jacob, not so fast," said Laban, smoothly. "It is not right in our country to give the younger in marriage before the first-born. Wait a while and I will give you Rachel, and you shall serve me yet seven years more for her."

Now, what was Jacob to do? He loved Rachel, and not Leah; and so he agreed. Thus Laban bound him to seven years more of service.

Perhaps Laban had heard what Jacob had done to Esau—who knows? The story does not tell.

In this way, much against his will, Jacob came to have two wives, a thing that often happened in those rude times.

Whenever Jacob saw a traveler's camel approaching, his heart beat fast, for he hoped it might be a messenger from his mother, saying, "All is well, come home." He knew that with his father's wealth, he could easily buy off the greedy Laban. But no messenger ever came, and he knew that Esau was still to be feared.

Jacob Grows Rich

The second seven years passed by, and Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, with my wives and my children, that I may go to my own country."

All Jacob had to show for his fourteen years of hard service were two wives and a large family.

"Stay with me a while longer," said Laban, "for I see that the Lord has prospered me for your sake. Name your wages, and I will pay them."

"You know how I have served you, and how the flocks and herds have increased under my care," said Jacob.

"Name your price," said Laban.

"You shall give me nothing," replied Jacob. "If you will do one thing for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it. We will divide the goats into two herds, all the speckled and spotted goats into one herd, and all the goats of one color into another herd, and all the speckled and spotted goats shall be my hire. We will also divide the sheep into two flocks, white and black, and the black shall be my hire."

Now the speckled and spotted goats were very few in Laban's herd, and the black sheep were still fewer, so Laban was pleased.

"Certainly," he agreed; "it shall be according to your word."

The same day they sorted them out, and the shepherds drove Jacob's little herd of speckled and spotted goats, and his little flock of black sheep off into the country three days' journey to

keep them separate from Laban's. And Jacob continued to keep Laban's flocks as before.

Now Jacob was a very great cattle breeder, even greater than his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac, who were the two greatest cattle breeders in all the land of the East.

So it came to pass, that every year when they sorted out Laban's droves, almost all the lambs were black, and almost all the kids of the goats were speckled and spotted, and belonged to Jacob. But when they sorted out Jacob's droves there were very few white lambs, or plain kids for Laban.

Year by year Jacob grew richer and richer, and was able to buy camels and asses, and to hire many servants. At the end of the sixth year Jacob was a very rich man.

No matter what Laban or his sons did, the result was the same; the flocks bred black sheep, and the herds, speckled and spotted goats.

"This man Jacob is taking away all that belongs to our father," Jacob heard Laban's sons saying; "he is getting all our sheep and goats."

Laban, too, gave Jacob black looks, for he did not understand it.

One day the Lord appeared to Jacob, and said, "Return to the land of your fathers, and I will be with you."

This was good news to Jacob, for he longed to return home.

About this time Laban went off to a distant flock to shear his sheep. Then Jacob quietly took Rachel and Leah, with the children, out to visit his own flocks which were pastured three days' journey from Laban's, and there he told them all about it.

Both Rachel and Leah answered, "Is there any portion for us in our father's house? Are we not counted as strangers? Has he not sold us to you, and also quite devoured our money? What do we owe him? All the riches that God has taken away from our father, are they not ours, and our children's? Do what God has told you."

This was enough for Jacob. The time had come to escape from his hard taskmaster.

He placed his wives and children upon the camels. There were eleven boys. Reuben was the oldest, and a little fellow named Joseph was the youngest. Then he gathered his great droves of camels, and sheep and goats and all his wealth, that he had gotten in Haran, and set out for his old home in the Promised Land.

When Rachel was leaving her father's house for the last time, she stole his household gods, images which he then worshiped, and carried them with her, but she said nothing to her husband.

Jacob Escapes from Laban

While Laban was quietly shearing his sheep, Jacob was fleeing by forced marches as fast as he could go. He wanted to put as many miles between himself and Laban as possible.

He passed over the Eu-phra-tes River, crossed the Syrian desert, and headed south toward the mountains of Gil-e-ad.

It was three days before Laban heard the news. He was very angry, and angrier still when he discovered that his household gods were gone. Calling his men, he pursued with all speed, but Jacob was traveling so fast that it was seven days before he caught up with him.

Jacob's tents were pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

Now in the night God had appeared in a dream to Laban, and had warned him not to harm Jacob; so Laban camped near Jacob, and went to see him.

"Why have you stolen away unawares from me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword?" he demanded. "Why did you fly secretly, and not tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, and kissed my daughters and their children good-by? Now you have done a foolish thing. It is in my power to do you hurt. But the God of your fathers

warned me not to harm you. Now, even if you must needs be gone, why have you stolen my gods?"

"Because I was afraid that you would take your daughters from me by force," Jacob replied. "Search for your gods; whoever stole them shall not live."

Laban searched through all the tents, and did not find them. Now Rachel had hidden them in her camel's load, and when her father came, she sat upon them. So Laban searched all over the tent, but did not find them.

Then Jacob was angry, and upbraided Laban.

"What is my trespass?" Jacob demanded. "What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Why have you searched through all my goods? What have you found? Bring it out, and let our men judge between us.

"These twenty years have I been with you, and kept your flocks. If any animal was torn by wild beasts, I bore the loss of it, whether stolen by day or by night. These twenty years have I been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for my flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my fathers had been with me, surely now you had sent me away empty handed."

"The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks; all that you see is mine; but what can I do this day to these my daughters or their children? Come now, let us make a covenant, I and you; and let it be for a witness between us," Laban answered.

So Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. "Gather stones," he said to his men; and they took stones and made a great heap; and they all ate together there by the heap.

The name of it was called Miz-pah, meaning watchtower; for Laban said:

"The Lord watch between me and thee,
When we are absent one from another."

"Let this heap, and this pillar be witness that I will not pass over this heap to you," said Laban; "and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of our fathers, Abraham and Nahor, judge between us."

To this Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac, and they ate bread, and tarried all night in the mountains.

Early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his daughters and their children, and blessed them. So Laban departed in peace, and returned to his own country, and Jacob went on his way to his father's tents.

Jacob Sends Gifts to Esau

Jacob's adventures were not yet over; he still had a great danger to face, the meeting with his older brother Esau. Esau was now the chieftain of a fierce and warlike tribe, which lived at Mount Seir, in the country of Edom, far to the south.

Twenty years before, Jacob had stolen his father's blessing, which was Esau's by right of birth, and Esau had threatened to kill him. In fear of his life, Jacob had fled to Laban, his uncle. Now he was returning, a great shepherd prince. What would Esau do?

Jacob sent a message of peace to his brother. "I have so-journed with Laban, and stayed until now," was the message. "I have great flocks and herds, and menservants and maidservants, and I have sent to tell my lord Esau, that I may find favor in his sight."

He had not long to wait before the messengers returned at top speed with startling news.

"We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you with an armed band of four hundred men."

Jacob was badly frightened; there was no escape, for Esau and his warriors could easily overtake him; he was at their mercy.

Scarcely knowing what he did, he divided his people, and the flocks, herds, and camels, into two companies.

"If Esau attacks one company," he thought, "perhaps the other company may have a chance to escape."

That night Jacob prayed in his tent as he had never prayed before, and this was his prayer:

"O God of Abraham, and of my father, Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Return unto your country, and to your people,' I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies, and of all the truth which you have shewed unto your servant; for with only a staff I crossed the Jordan, and now I have returned with these two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and smite us, the mothers with the children."

The next day Jacob changed his plan. He said to himself, "I will send presents before me to Esau; and afterwards, when I meet him face to face, perhaps he will be the more willing to forgive the wrong I did him."

So he chose a princely gift from his great flocks and herds, five hundred and eighty of the finest animals, and divided them into five droves on the banks of the Jab-bok, a small stream by which they were encamped.

The first drove was made up of two hundred and twenty goats. These he placed in charge of a trusted servant, with this command, "When Esau my brother meets you, and asks, 'Whose herd is this, and where are you going?' you will reply, 'These are your servant Jacob's; it is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'"

Then he ordered the servant to take the goats across the ford of the river, and go to meet Esau.

The second drove was made up of two hundred and twenty sheep. These he sent across the ford with orders to follow a mile or two behind the first, with the same message to Esau.

Sixty camels, thirty mothers with their thirty colts, formed the third drove; they were sent after the second, with the same message.

The fourth drove was fifty head of cattle, forty cows and ten bulls. They followed the third across, with the same message.

The fifth drove was made up of twenty asses, and ten colts, with the same message.

So that day the five presents passed over the ford, keeping a mile or two between them, and were driven toward Esau.

Before Esau reached Jacob's family he would receive the five presents, and their five messages, one after the other.

It was nightfall before the last gift was safely on its way, and what was left of the two companies retired for the night, to await what would happen.

Jacob Wrestles with an Angel

But Jacob could not sleep. He knew that Esau and his band must be near, and that the morrow must decide his fate. He rose up in the night, and in the darkness moved his family across the ford.

After that he was left alone on the banks of the stream. There a strange and nameless dread of the future came upon him. Before another sunset either he would be slain and his wives and children would be captives, or else Esau would have forgiven him.

Then came the most fearful event of his life. In the darkness a mysterious being attacked him. Jacob was a strong man, and no coward, although a man of peace, and he grappled with his assailant.

They wrestled to and fro all night long, neither uttering a word, grim, silent, and fierce in the darkness. So they wrestled almost till daybreak, and neither could get the better of the other. At last his opponent wrenched the great sinew in the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and lamed him so that he cried in pain.

"Now," said he, "let me go, for the day is breaking."

By this time Jacob knew that it was no human antagonist who wrestled with him, but he held him in a grip of strength. "I will not let you go, except you bless me," he said.

"What is your name?" the man asked Jacob.

"Jacob," he replied.

"Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but 'Israel,' for you have striven with God, and with men, and have prevailed," was the startling reply.

"Tell me, I pray you, your name?" Jacob asked him.

"Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there, and disappeared.

Jacob knew that he had won the victory; he was no longer afraid.

"The name of the place shall be called 'Pe-ni-el,' " he said; "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

When Jacob stood up, and tried to walk, he found that he was lame; and after that he walked with a limp as long as he lived.

Jacob Meets Esau

As Jacob crossed the brook and looked toward the south, he saw Esau and his men riding toward him in the morning sunlight.

For a moment his alarm returned, and then telling his family not to be afraid, he went to meet Esau, and bowed himself to the ground seven times.

When Esau saw him coming, he ordered his men to halt; and, running to meet his brother, he fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept. The twenty years' quarrel was at an end and the brothers were at peace with each other.

Then Esau lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and children. "Who are these?" he asked.

"The wives and children whom God has graciously given me," said Jacob, calling to them; and they came and bowed before Esau.

"What are these five companies that I have met?" Esau asked.

"To find favor in the sight of my lord," said Jacob.

"I have enough, my brother; let what you have be yours," Esau said, smiling.

"No," Jacob urged him, "take, I pray you, my gifts, because God has dealt graciously with me."

So Esau accepted Jacob's gifts.

After a time the brothers parted as friends, Esau returning with his men to Mount Seir, while Jacob crossed the river Jordan into the Promised Land, and encamped at a place called Shechem.

Jacob Returns Home

While Jacob was at Shechem God appeared to him again, and told him to go to Beth-el and build an altar where he had spent his first night when fleeing from Esau twenty years before.

"Put away the strange gods that are among you; purify yourselves, and change your garments," Jacob commanded his household; "and let us arise and go to Beth-el; there I will make an altar to God who answered me in the day of my distress."

So Jacob gathered all the strange images which his people had in the camp, and the rings that were in their ears, and buried them secretly under an oak tree at Shechem.

When he arrived at Beth-el, he set up an altar on the very spot where he had seen the angels' ladder, and where God had spoken to him for the first time. Here God appeared to him again.

"Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel," was the message. "I am God Almighty: and you shall be the father of a nation and of a company of nations; and the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and your children after you."

So the promise made to his father and grandfather was renewed to Jacob at Beth-el, the house of God.

After that, Jacob and his party journeyed on toward Hebron, where Isaac was. While they were encamped at Beth-le-hem, Rachel gave birth to a second son, and soon after that she died. As she was dying she called him Ben-on-i, the son of my sorrow, but his father called him Ben-ja-min, son of my right hand. He

was the brother of Joseph, and the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons.

There, mourning greatly, Jacob buried Rachel and set up a pillar over her grave.

A short time after this, Jacob, with his family and all his possessions, reached his father's tents at Hebron. Rebekah was dead. Isaac, a lonely old man, was very happy to see his lost son, and to know that the brothers were friends again before he died.

Death came to him at the age of one hundred and eighty, and Esau and Jacob buried him with his wife and his father and mother in the cave of Machpelah.

When their father's wealth was divided between the two brothers, they were so rich in cattle that there was not land enough for both; so Jacob remained in Canaan, which was the Promised Land; and Esau went back to Mount Seir.

Jacob became the head of the Chosen Family, who many years afterwards were known as the Children of Israel; and Esau, the prince of a great heathen people in Edom.

* * * * *

As their Aunt ceased speaking, the children sat silent for a moment, and then Billy spoke up from his place on the floor:

"Why, Aunt, those stories are great."

"Yes," added his sister, "I felt as though I really knew the family. I seemed to travel along with them from place to place—and I imagined I could hear them talking."

Her aunt nodded her head. "Just so, my child, just so. That is the feeling that all people have who study the Bible. Not only do they make friends of the Bible People, but they learn to know God himself as a friend."

"Yes, indeed; I see that," said the little girl. "How near a friend he was to those people. When you spoke of Joseph, I remembered that God helped him, too."

At the mention of Joseph the boy sat upright.

"I am very glad," said her aunt, "for that is the next story."



JOSEPH BUILT GREAT STOREHOUSES TO STORE THE GRAIN

VI

THE STORY OF JOSEPH

WHEN the two children opened Uncle Ben's book the next day, you can imagine how happy they were to find the story in Joseph's own words, just as he might have told it to his children. Without waste of time Billy seized the book and plunged into the story, while his sister sat eagerly listening.

Sold Into Slavery

My father, Jacob, loved my mother, Rachel, very dearly. Soon after she died he moved his family and all his cattle into the Vale of Hebron, and there we pitched our tents.

Baby Benjamin and I were own brothers, the only children of our mother. Now father had twelve sons, so that the other ten

were really our half brothers. Because we were the youngest, it was natural that he should love us more than the others, who were grown men, well able to take care of themselves.

While our brothers were tending the flocks and herds, we two boys played about the tents, and became very dear to each other. As I grew older I went into the fields to assist my brothers, and Benjamin was left at home.

These ten brothers were a wild and lawless set, always getting into mischief and making trouble for our father, who was a very rich chief. When I was about seventeen years old, I innocently aroused their ill-will by telling father some of their doings, which were worse than usual. Instead of being sorry for what they had done, they turned their anger on me.

About this time father gave me a new coat, a gay tunic of many colors; and of course I was very proud of it, as any boy would be. When the ten saw this coat, they were angrier still, and never after that gave me a civil word.

One thing leads to another, and now came a happening that made them hate me still more. One night, after a busy day binding sheaves of wheat, as we lay sleeping in the harvest field, I dreamed a dream so strange that I told it to my brothers in the morning.

"Listen to my strange dream," I said. "I dreamed that we were all binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf rose from the ground and stood upright, and your sheaves all gathered round and bowed down to my sheaf."

How they mocked and jeered! "You will reign over us, will you? We'll see!" they cried.

A few nights later, to make matters worse, I dreamed another and a stranger dream. This puzzled me so much that I could not keep it to myself, but must needs tell my father and my brothers.

"Father," I said, "I dreamed and behold, as I dreamed the sun, the moon, and eleven stars gathered round and bowed down to me."

At this, even father rebuked me, and said, "Shall we indeed come and bow down ourselves to the earth before you?"

This dream made my brothers hate me still more, for they half believed in dreams. I could see that father, too, often thought about it, as he stroked his beard. Perhaps he was as much puzzled as I was—he could not have been more so.

Soon after this my brothers went away with the sheep, to pasture them in the fields at Shechem, a place about fifty miles to the north. As the days went by, and no news came from them, father grew very anxious.

"Joseph, I wonder if anything has happened," he would say. At last, when he could wait no longer, he said, "Come now, I will send you to find out."

"Very well, father, I am ready," I replied.

"Go quickly," he said, "and see whether it is well with them, and bring me word again."

Now, if father had had the slightest notion of the hatred and jealousy of his ten sons toward me, he would not have sent me on such an errand; but he did not know, and neither did I. And so, not thinking of danger, I set out afoot, bravely enough, on the fifty-mile journey. Little did we think when we bade each other good-by that many long years would pass before we saw each other again.

After a hard journey I arrived at Shechem, but neither shepherds nor sheep were to be seen. Full of anxiety, I wandered over the fields looking for them, and at last met a man who told me that my brothers had gone to Do-than, a place fifteen miles farther on. Although footsore and weary, I set off for Dothan, and there I found them, as the man had said.

When my brothers caught sight of me running eagerly across the plain, a wicked plot formed itself in their heads, as Reu-ben told me long afterwards.

"Look," they said to one another, "here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw his body into a pit, and we

will say that a wild beast has killed him. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams."

"No, let us not take his life," said Reuben, the oldest of the ten. "Shed no blood; throw him into a pit, if you will, but lay no hand upon him."

To this they agreed, and Reuben, who was the best of the lot, went away, for he wanted no part in what they were about to do. He thought to himself, "After the others are gone, I will return and rescue him out of the pit and send him home to his father."

When I came up, ignorant of their plot, my pleasant greeting was met by black looks. Before I knew what was going to happen, or had a chance to run, they seized me roughly, tore off my new coat, and dragged me toward the pit, crying, "Now, dreamer, what will become of your dreams?"

At the mouth of the pit I struggled desperately and begged for mercy, but they were too strong for me. So they threw me in, and down I went. Half stunned and bruised, I lay at the bottom. Fortunately for me, the pit, which was really an old well, was dry. Then I got up and tried to climb out, but the sides were too steep. There my heartless brothers left me to starve and, deaf to my cries, sat down to eat their dinner.

Now Judah, another of the brothers, had as little liking for murder as Reuben, but he knew nothing of Reuben's plans. While they were eating, a long line of camels suddenly appeared above the horizon. It was an Arab caravan carrying spices and precious things down into Egypt, and Judah saw in it a way of escape.

"What good will it do us to kill our brother and conceal his blood?" he asked. "Come, let us sell him to these merchants; let us not kill him, for he is our brother."

This scheme appealed to them, for it offered them a chance to get rid of me without killing me, and to obtain some money at the same time. So they quickly drew me out of the well and sold me for twenty pieces of silver to the Arab merchants who had now come up. I begged them to let me return home, but I might as

well have pleaded with a stone. If my brothers did not care, why should the Arabs care? It was their business to buy and sell slaves, as well as spices; so they bound me and carried me off to Egypt.

Soon after the caravan had disappeared, Reuben returned to rescue me. When he saw that I was not in the pit, he tore his clothes and ran crying to his brothers, "The boy is not there; what shall I do? What shall I say to our father?"

This is what they did. To hide one crime they committed another, and a worse. They killed a goat, and dipped my torn coat in the blood. When they reached home, they brought the bloody coat to father, and said, "We found this in the wilderness; know now whether it is your son's coat or not."

"It is my son's coat," he cried; "a wild beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces!"

Then he put on mourning and mourned for me many days. His family tried to comfort him, my guilty brothers among them, but he refused to be comforted, and wept, crying, "I will go down to the grave to my son mourning!"

Even Reuben and Judah, who had saved my life, were too cowardly to tell the sorrowing old man that his lost son still lived.

A Slave in Egypt

After many days' journey, over mountain and desert and river, the Arab caravan at last arrived in Egypt and came to Pharaoh's court, where the merchants offered me for sale as a slave. Since leaving home that last morning on my fateful errand, I had suffered much, and my sufferings had turned me from a foolish boy into a man.

"I must keep up a brave heart, and some day I shall win freedom," I thought, as I looked curiously at the strange scenes about me.

Just then Captain Pot-i-phar, an officer of the king's guard,



SO THEY QUICKLY DREW JOSEPH OUT OF THE WELL, AND SOLD HIM FOR TWENTY PIECES
OF SILVER TO THE ARAB MERCHANTS

happened to be passing. He looked at me as if he liked me, bought me on the spot, and almost before I knew what was happening we were on our way to his house.

I liked my new master and was faithful and zealous in all his work. Though I was far away from my father's tent, God was with me and prospered me in all that I did. When the captain saw that I was honest and to be trusted he made me overseer of his house and put me in charge of his servants and property, and all that he had.

The captain, who was fully occupied with his important military duties, had little time for his own affairs, and was only too happy to intrust them to so trustworthy a slave as I proved to be. His wealth increased under his new overseer's diligence as never before, and he was more than pleased. I, too, was happy at my success, for it seemed to bring me nearer and nearer to the day of freedom.

But such good fortune was not to last. Through no fault of my own I made an enemy, and that enemy was no less a person than the captain's wife. At first she was very friendly with me, but when I would not do wrong to please her, she turned against me, and falsely accused me to her husband. In this she was aided by some of my fellow servants who were jealous of my position as overseer.

Unfortunately, Captain Potiphar believed his wife's lying words, and became very angry at me. He would not believe me, even though I declared my innocence, but put me into the prison where the king's prisoners were kept.

Alas, I was disgraced. All my hopes of freedom were blasted. I, who as a lad had lived in the free outdoors on the plains with the cattle, sleeping in a tent or on the bare ground, now found myself shut in a prison cell. But I did not despair, for God was with me, and gave me favor in the eyes of the keeper of the prison.

The keeper knew who I was, and did not more than half believe the stories told about me. Very soon he committed to

me the care of all the prisoners. He left everything to me and gave me full charge.

Long months passed, and still I was not released, but I did not despair. What my hand found to do, I did with all my might. Then one day two new prisoners were brought in—the chief butler and the chief baker of the king of Egypt. These officers had offended the king, who was very angry with them and ordered them to be thrown into the prison, and both men were placed in my charge.

One night the chief butler and the chief baker each dreamed a dream. When I came in to them in the morning they were looking very sad and downcast.

“Why do you look so sad to-day?” I asked.

“We have dreamed a dream,” they replied, “and there is no one who can explain it.”

“Do not explanations belong to God? Tell me your dreams, I pray you,” was my reply.

Then the chief butler told his dream.

“In my dream,” he said, “I saw a vine before me; and on the vine were three branches; the branches budded and the blossoms shot forth, and the clusters brought forth ripe grapes, and Pharaoh’s wine cup was in my hand. Then I plucked the grapes, and pressed them into the cup, and gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.”

“This is the meaning of your dream,” I replied. “The three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh will release you, and restore you to your office, and you will give the cup into Pharaoh’s hand, as you did when you were his butler. But remember me when it shall be well with you. Show kindness, I pray you, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this place, and try to obtain pardon for me, for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon.”

My explanation of his dream made the butler very happy,

and he promised faithfully to remember me when he was released.

When the chief baker saw that the meaning was good, he said to me, "I also was in my dream, and behold, three baskets of white bread were on my head, and in the topmost basket there were all kinds of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."

"This is the meaning of it," I said. "The three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head from off you, and will hang you on a tree and the birds will eat your flesh."

On his birthday, which came three days later, Pharaoh made a feast for all his servants. He brought the chief butler and the chief baker from prison, and restored the chief butler to his office again, so that he stood beside his table and gave the cup into his hand. But he hanged the chief baker, just as the dream had foretold.

Yet the chief butler did not remember his promise to me, but forgot all about it. Two long years passed slowly by and I was still in prison. Then a strange thing happened.

Pharaoh's Dream

One night, at the end of that time, the king of Egypt dreamed two strange dreams. When the morning came, his mind was troubled. He sent for all the magicians and all the wise men of Egypt, and told them his two dreams, but none of them could explain the dreams.

Then the chief butler, who was standing by, spoke to the king, saying, "I remember my faults this day. Two years ago Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put both the chief baker and me in prison. One night we both dreamed a dream. Now, there was with us in the prison a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted our dreams. As he interpreted to us, so it was; me the king restored to my office, and the baker he hanged."

Then Pharaoh sent for me, and they brought me hastily out of the dungeon; and I shaved myself, changed my clothes, and stood before Pharaoh.

I was now thirty years old; thirteen years had passed since as a boy of seventeen I had been sold into slavery, and the last of those years I had spent in prison. The prison pallor showed on my face, but my body was still strong and rugged from the years of youth spent in the open air tending my father's flocks. So I faced the king with a calm and resolute countenance. I thought to myself, "At last my chance has come."

"I have dreamed twice, and no one can tell me the meaning of my dreams; I have been told that you can interpret a dream when you hear it," Pharaoh said to me.

"It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace," I answered.

"This was my dream," said Pharaoh. "I stood upon the brink of the river, and saw seven cows come up out of the river, fat of flesh and good looking, and they fed in a meadow. Right after them came up seven other cows, poor and ill-looking, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for leanness; and the lean and ill-looking cows, instead of eating the grass, ate up the seven fat cows; and when they had eaten them, they were as lean as before. So I awoke."

I listened intently, but said nothing, and the king continued:

"And I saw in my dream seven ears of corn spring up upon one stalk, full and good; and then seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprang up after them: and the seven thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. I told the dream to the magicians, but not one of them could tell me what it meant."

As the king ceased speaking, I knew the answer.

"The dream of Pharaoh is one," I said. "God has declared to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years; the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. The seven lean and ill-looking cows that came up after them are

seven years, and also the seven empty ears, blasted with the east wind; they shall be seven years of famine. What God is about to do he has showed Pharaoh in his dream."

Not a sound was heard in the court as I continued:

"Behold, seven years of great plenty shall come throughout the land of Egypt, and after them there shall be seven years of great famine. All the plenty shall be forgotten, and the famine shall eat up the land; and the plenty shall be consumed by the famine which follows, for it shall be very sore. The dream was doubled because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

As I unfolded the dream, the king's eyes never left me.

"Now, therefore," I continued, "let Pharaoh look for a man sensible and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land who shall take up a fifth part of the harvest in the seven plenteous years. Let them gather the good food of these good years to come, and store up wheat for food in the cities, and let them keep it in storehouses against the seven years of famine, that the people may not perish through the famine."

My explanation seemed good in the eyes of the king. The meaning of the dream was clear. He expressed intense pleasure at the sense and wisdom of my words, and so did all the court.

"Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" the king asked his officers.

I stood before this man whose word was life or death, a slave awaiting my dismissal. Then a thing almost too strange to believe happened.

Fixing his eyes on me, Pharaoh said, "Since God has showed you all this, there is no other man so sensible and wise as you. You shall be my governor, and according to your word shall all of my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than you. See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

Then the king, who never did things by halves, took off his

signet ring from his hand and put it upon my hand, and clothed me in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around my neck.

"I am Pharaoh," he said, "and without you shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt."

As next in authority to the king, I was to ride in the second chariot, and when the people saw me coming, they were to cry, "Bow the knee."

So the slave, who yesterday was in a dungeon, became that day the ruler of Egypt, second in power only to the king himself.

Joseph, the Ruler of Egypt

There was no time to be lost. I did not lose a day—no, not a minute, in setting about my work. I divided all Egypt into districts, and appointed an overseer over each district.

Then I rode up and down the country in my chariot and warned the people of the coming danger. I encouraged the farmers to plant their fields, and to grow large crops of wheat and rye and millet and barley. I distributed seeds to those who had none.

I built great storehouses in the cities and in each district to store the grain. When the harvest time came the people gathered all that was not required for their daily needs and brought it into the storehouses.

For seven plenteous years the land brought forth abundant crops, such as had never been heard of, and we gathered up all the grain as the sands of the sea. At first we kept account of the number of bushels, but soon it poured in so fast that we left off counting, for it was countless.

I heard that some laughed and mocked behind my back and said, "Ha! Ha! there will be no famine."

But none ever dared mock to my face, or to withhold his surplus, for Pharaoh approved of all that I did. I had ever before me a picture of the time to come when the people, and even the

cattle, would be crying with hunger, and I would open the storehouses and give them food.

Meanwhile I had married, with the king's permission, a girl who was as good as she was beautiful, As-e-nath, the daughter of a priest of On. Before the famine came we had two boys born to us. The first-born I called Ma-nas-seh, and the second I called E-phra-im.

Then the seven years of plenty came to an end; and famine stalked through the land, as I had foretold. The famine spread throughout Egypt and all the neighboring lands; but in Egypt alone there was bread.

When the people were famished with hunger, they cried to Pharaoh for bread.

"Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do," he told them.

When they came, I opened the storehouses and supplied their needs; for the famine was sore in Egypt, and the land would yield nothing. It was no better in the surrounding countries, and their people came down to Egypt and begged me to save their lives, and I supplied them with food.

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

Now the famine was bitter in the land of Canaan, and father Jacob's grandchildren came to his tent door crying for food, as they afterwards told me.

"Why do you stand there looking at one another?" Jacob asked his sons. "I have heard there is food in Egypt. Go down and buy for us, that we may live, and not die."

So my ten half brothers came down into Egypt to buy corn. But father Jacob would not permit my brother Benjamin to go with them.

"I am afraid something might happen to him," he said.

My father believed that I was dead, torn in pieces by wild beasts, and he had never ceased to blame himself for sending me

on that errand to my brothers; and all the time my heartless brothers knew the truth, but never told him.

When the ten arrived in Egypt, they came with all the other starving people, and bowed down before me, begging for food.

I saw them in the crowd, and knew them at once, but they did not know me; they saw in me only the food controller of Egypt.

"Where are you from?" I made myself strange to them, and spoke roughly.

"From the land of Canaan to buy food," they replied.

"You are spies, come to spy out the nakedness of the land," I said, still more roughly.

"No, my lord," they replied, "but to buy food are your servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, and not spies."

"No," I said, "you are come to spy out the nakedness of the land."

"We are twelve brothers," they said, "the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; the youngest is at home with our father, and one is dead."

"By the life of Pharaoh, your words shall be proved," I cried; "you shall not leave here until your youngest brother is brought down. Send one of you and let him fetch your brother, that I may know whether there be truth in you, or else by the life of Pharaoh surely you are spies."

So I put them all together in prison for three days. On the third day I had them brought before me again.

"This do, and live," I said to them, "for I fear God. If you are true men, let one of you be bound in prison, but let the others go and carry corn for the famine of your houses, and bring your youngest brother down to me; so shall your words be proved, and you shall not die."

To this they agreed. They said one to another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother Joseph. When he begged us

not to sell him and we saw the distress of his soul, we would not listen."

"Did I not say to you," Reuben answered, "'do not sin against the child', and you would not listen; therefore now, his blood is required."

They did not know that I understood every word, for I talked with them through an interpreter. My heart was touched, and I was so overcome that I went out of the room and wept. When I returned, I chose Sim-e-on as hostage, and bound him before their eyes and sent him back to prison.

Then I sent the nine men to the storehouse, and ordered my steward to fill their sacks with corn, and to put every man's money in his sack, and to give them provision for the journey; and thus he did.

As soon as their beasts were loaded with the sacks of grain, they set out on their journey north, leaving Simeon bound in the prison. When they arrived at their camping place for the night, one of them opened his sack and saw his money.

"My money is restored," he cried; "lo, it has been put back into my sack."

When they saw the bundle of money, they were afraid, and turned trembling one to another saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

After a long and weary journey they reached home, and told their father, Jacob, what had happened to them—how the ruler of the land had spoken harshly to them, called them spies, bound Simeon in prison, and ordered them to bring Benjamin down to Egypt to prove that they were true men, and not spies.

When they opened the first sack, and found the money they had been too frightened to open the others, but when they did untie them their worst fears were realized—every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the money they were afraid.

"You have robbed me of my children," their father cried.

"Joseph is dead, Simeon is in prison, and now you will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me."

"Slay my two sons," Reuben answered, "if I bring him not back. Give Benjamin into my charge, and I will bring him to you again."

"My son shall not go down with you," Jacob replied; "for his brother is dead, and he only is left. If harm befall him by the way in which you go, then shall you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

So he would not let Benjamin go.

The Brothers Go Again

The second year came, and still the parched ground would yield nothing; the famine grew worse and worse.

The corn the brothers had brought from Egypt had soon been eaten up, for there were about sixty mouths to feed in Jacob's family. When the mothers brought their children to their grandfather's tent, crying with hunger, the tender-hearted old man could resist no longer.

"Go down into Egypt again," he said to his sons, "and buy us a little food."

Then Judah, the son who first thought of selling me into slavery, told once more why they could not go.

"Father," he said, "the man warned us solemnly that we should not see his face again unless we brought our youngest brother with us. If you will send Benjamin with us, we will go down and buy food; but if you will not send him, we will not go. The man would arrest us for spies, and put us in prison with Simeon."

"Why were you so foolish as to tell the man you had a brother?" cried Jacob.

"The man asked us strictly about ourselves and our family," replied Judah. "'Is your father living? Have you another brother?' he inquired, and we told him. How could we know

that he would say 'Bring your brother down'? Send the lad with me, and we will go, that we may live, and not die, and you, and our little ones. I will be security for him. If I do not bring him back, I will bear the blame for ever."

At last their father yielded; there was nothing else to do.

"If it must be so," he said, "do this; carry down a present to the man, some balm, honey, spices, nuts, and almonds; and take double money with you, besides the money that was returned in your sacks—perhaps it was an oversight. Take also your brother and go, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release Simeon and return Benjamin; for if I am robbed of my children, I am robbed indeed."

So the brothers got ready their presents, and took a double supply of money, for they had plenty of gold and silver, but no food, and came down into Egypt, and brought Benjamin with them.

When they arrived they came to me as before, and bowed themselves to the ground. I eyed them with seeming sternness, although when I saw Benjamin my heart yearned over him.

"Bring these men into my house," I said to my steward, "and prepare a feast, for they shall dine with me at noon."

When the steward brought them in, they were afraid, and said to themselves, "He will accuse us of stealing the money that was returned in our sacks, and seize us and hold us as slaves."

They took the steward aside, and told him about the money.

"Peace be to you; fear not," the steward replied, smiling. "The God of your father has given you the treasure in your sacks; I had your money and put it back. To-day you are to dine with the governor."

When they heard this their fears were much relieved, and they wondered what it all meant. Then the steward brought in Simeon from prison, and gave them water to wash their feet.

When I came in at noon, they laid their present before me, and bowed themselves to the earth. I thanked them, speaking in Egyptian, through my interpreter.

"Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still living?" I asked.

"Your servant our father is well; he is yet alive," they replied, bowing low.

Then turning my eyes to Benjamin, my younger brother, I asked, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" To him I said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

The tears rose to my eyes as I looked at Benjamin with whom as a boy I had played about our father's tent in far-off Hebron. Turning away quickly, I hurried to my chamber, and wept there. Then I washed my face and returned to my wondering brothers.

"Let the dinner be served," I said to the steward.

I sat alone at a separate table, and they at a table by themselves, for it was then the rule that the Egyptians should not eat bread with the Hebrews. My brothers still supposing me to be an Egyptian, sat before me; the eldest, Reuben, according to his birthright, and the youngest Benjamin, according to his youth, the men wondering how I knew their ages. I sent food to them from my table, but Benjamin's plate held five times as much as his brothers'. So they ate and drank and were merry with me.

When the dinner was over, I gave orders to the steward secretly:

"Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth as before; and put my silver cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest, with his corn money." And the steward did so.

The next morning at daylight, the eleven brothers set out on their return, with their beasts loaded with as much grain as they could carry.

When they had left the city, but were not yet far off, I said to the steward, "Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say, 'Why have you returned evil for good? Where is my master's silver cup? You have done evil in taking it away.'"

Mounting his chariot, the steward soon overtook the men, and demanded the silver cup.

"Why does my lord say such things?" they cried, in fear. "God forbid that we should do such a thing. Behold, the money that we found in our sacks before, we brought again to you out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal silver or gold out of your lord's house? Let him with whom the cup is found die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

"Now let it be according to your words," the steward replied. "He with whom the cup is found shall be our slave; the others shall be blameless."

The steward searched every man's sack, beginning at the eldest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then the brothers tore their clothes, reloaded their beasts, and returned to the city.

Joseph Makes Himself Known

When Judah and his brothers arrived at my house, I was there waiting, and they fell to the ground before me.

"What deed is this that you have done?" I demanded, sternly. "Did you not know that such a man as I would surely find you out?"

"What shall we answer my lord?" cried Judah. "What shall we say? How shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the wickedness of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found."

"God forbid that I should do so!" I exclaimed harshly. "The man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my slave; but as for the rest of you, you are free to go in peace to your father."

I was putting the ten to the final test. Would they sacrifice Benjamin to save their own skins? Upon their decision depended their fate.

Then Judah came near—Judah, the very man who had sold me into slavery—and said, "Oh, my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against us, for you are even as Pharaoh.

"My lord asked his servants, 'Have you a father, or a brother?'

"We said, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.'

"And you said, 'Bring him down unto me, that I may set my eyes upon him.'

"And we said unto my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die!'

"And you replied, 'Except your youngest brother come down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

"And it came to pass when we came to our father that we told him the words of my lord.

"Our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food.'

"'We cannot go down,' we said, 'for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.'

"Our father said to us, 'You know that my wife Rachel gave me two sons; and the one went out from me; and I said, surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since; and if you take this one from me and mischief befall him, you shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"Now, therefore, when I come to my father, and the lad is not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass that he will die, and we shall bring down the gray hairs of our father with sorrow to the grave.

"For your servant became security for the lad, saying, 'If I bring him not back, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever.'

"Now therefore, let me, I pray you, abide instead of the lad, a slave to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me, lest I see the evil that shall come to my father?"

"Let every Egyptian leave the room," I cried, as Judah finished.

When I was alone with my brothers, I broke down and wept

aloud, and could not control myself. The Egyptians heard the sound of my weeping and wondered.

"I am Joseph," I cried to my brothers in their own tongue. "Does my father yet live?"

They could not answer me, for they were troubled to see the ruler of Egypt, whom they feared, weeping and crying, "I am Joseph, your brother."

"Come near to me, I pray you," I cried to them.

"I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt," I said, the tears running down my face.

"Now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land; and there are yet five years in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

"Make haste, and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down, and tarry not. You shall dwell in the land of Go-shen, and you shall be near me, you and your children, and children's children, and your flocks, and your herds, and all that you have; for there are yet five years of famine.'

"Behold, your eyes see, my brothers, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall haste and bring him down."

Then I fell upon Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon my neck; and I kissed my brethren, and forgave them all.

After that, I left off weeping, and we talked to one another freely.

Jacob Moves to Egypt

The good news that my brothers had come soon spread, as good news will. When the king heard it, he was pleased, and all the court with him.

"Tell your brothers to load their beasts," said he to me; "and go up to Canaan and fetch their father and their households and come down to me, and I will give them the fat of the land. Tell them they are to take wagons for their little ones and their wives, and bring their father and come, for the good of the land of Egypt is theirs."

I did so, and gave them provisions for the journey. To each of them I gave a change of clothing; but to Benjamin I gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of clothing. To my father I sent twenty asses loaded with the good things of Egypt.

Then I bade them good-by, and said, "See that you do not fall out by the way."

The journey of the brothers north was not a very happy one, even though they were carrying great supplies of food, for they also carried guilty consciences. They kept asking themselves, "What will our father say when he finds out that we sold Joseph into slavery?"

As they drew near to Hebron they became more uneasy. "Who will tell him?" they asked, looking at one another.

"You must tell him," said Judah to Reuben.

"No," said Reuben to Judah. "You tell him; you proposed to sell Joseph."

At last the journey was over, and the tents of Jacob came in sight. When Jacob saw the string of wagons, and the twenty beasts of burden, perhaps he wondered, "Whom have they been plundering now?"

Benjamin ran to him crying, "Father, father, Joseph is alive; he is governor over all the land of Egypt."

The poor old man sank to the ground and his heart fainted. He could not believe the story—it was too good to be true.

When they gave him my message he looked at the wagons, and his spirit revived. He threw himself on Benjamin's neck and cried, "It is enough; my son Joseph still lives; I will go and see him before I die."

They unloaded their corn and provisions, and showed him all that I had sent, and his suspicions were aroused. The brothers watched him in fear; they knew their time had come.

"Reuben," asked the old man, sternly, "how came Joseph in Egypt?"

Reuben did not reply, but looked at Judah, who hung his head in shame.

"Father, forgive us," he said. "He was not killed by wild beasts; we—we sold him—into slavery."

The truth had come out at last.

The old man looked at them in horror, but said nothing—what could he say?

He bowed his head and tottered into his tent. He saw my torn coat hanging by his bed. For twenty-two years his heartless sons had let him think that I had been devoured by wild beasts—they had let him suffer and had never said a word. The heart-broken old man threw himself on his bed in an agony of grief and wept.

As he lay there his sorrow gave way to anger.

"Joseph, a slave—sold into slavery!" Then his anger gave way to happiness. "Joseph is alive—alive!"

Then he rose up, a new man, and went out to the guilty men.

"Strike the tents!" he ordered. "Pack up our goods; we will go down into Egypt."

This took some time, for Jacob's family now numbered sixty-six, sixty-seven counting himself, men, women and children; besides their flocks and herds and servants. At last the cattle were gathered, the tents were taken down, the women and children placed in the wagons, the beasts loaded; and then the caravan set off on the march south.

As they neared the land of Goshen, which lies in the delta of the river Nile, Judah went on before to notify me that they were coming, and I mounted my chariot and rode to meet my father.

Twenty-two long years had passed since I had seen him, but when I looked at him I forgot that I was governor of Egypt, and put my head on my father's shoulder and wept a good while.

"Now let me die, since I have seen your face, and you are yet alive," cried the good old man.

After that, I took five of my brothers with me, and presented them to Pharaoh.

When they were brought in, Pharaoh asked them, "What is your occupation?"

"Your servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth up even until now, both we, and our fathers," they replied. "To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for our flocks in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, we pray you let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

"Your father and brothers are come to you; the land of Egypt is before you," the king said to me. "Let them dwell in the best of the land, in the land of Goshen; and if you know any able men among them, make them overseers of my cattle."

Then I brought in my father, and set him before Pharaoh.

"How old are you?" Pharaoh asked him, kindly.

"The days of the years of my life are one hundred and thirty years," said father Jacob, and lifting his hands he asked God's blessing on the king for all his kindness.

So the Children of Israel, as Jacob's family was called, dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Goshen; and they grew rich in possessions, and greatly multiplied in numbers.

The Children of Israel in Egypt

Before our father died at the age of one hundred and forty-seven, after having been in Egypt seventeen years, he called us to his bedside and gave us his last commands.

"I am to be gathered to my people," he said; "bury me with my fathers in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan, with Abraham and Isaac."

This we promised, and he gave us his blessing, and foretold what was to come.

"Behold, I die," he said; "but God will be with you and bring you again to the land of your fathers. Each one of you will become a tribe, and there will be twelve tribes of Israel; and after many years God will lead your children up to possess the land of Canaan according to his promise."

With many other words also our father charged us, and when he had made an end, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up his spirit.

After our weeping was over, I ordered the physicians to prepare him for burial, and they did so.

When seventy days of mourning had passed, I went to Pharaoh.

"My father made me swear to bury him in the land of Canaan," I said. "Now therefore, let me go up, I pray you, and bury my father, and I will come again."

"Go up and bury him as he made you swear," the king answered.

So we went up, my brothers, and all the chief men of Egypt, with chariots and horsemen, a very great company, and buried our father in the cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan.

Now when my brothers saw that their father was dead, their consciences troubled them again.

"It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully repay all the evil which we did to him," they said to one another.

"Before he died, our father commanded us to ask your forgiveness," they came to me and said. "Now therefore, forgive, we pray you, this wrong your brothers did you."

Then they fell down before me and said, "Behold, we are your servants." When they spoke thus, I wept.

"Do not fear," I said. "Am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, that many people might be saved alive. Do not fear; I will protect you and your little ones."

At last they felt that they were truly forgiven, but they never ceased to be sorry.

* * * * *

The story ended; the Oriental figures in their flowing robes seemed far away, and with a long-drawn sigh the children closed the book and hurried to find Aunt Maria. "We know all about Joseph," both exclaimed.

"And that's as far as we know," Mary Frances finished, when they had retold the story.

"Aunty, how did the Children of Israel get out of Egypt?" asked Billy.

"That is a splendid question," said his aunt. "Would you like me to tell you about it? It's a famous story."

"Would we?" he replied eagerly.

"Well, then—to-morrow."

So the next evening Aunt Maria began the story of The Chosen People in Slavery.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN SLAVERY.



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN SLAVERY

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”—EXODUS 20: 2, 3.



THEN MOSES BURIED THE DEAD MAN IN THE SAND

VII

A GREAT LEADER

The People are Oppressed

WHILE the good Pharaoh whom Joseph served was alive, the Chosen People were well treated. When he and Joseph were dead and forgotten, the Egyptians began to oppress them.

The wicked Pharaoh who was now king had forgotten all that Joseph had done for the Egyptians, or it may be, had never even heard of him.

“See, these people have become mightier than we; perhaps when war comes they will take sides with our enemies. Let us keep them down,” he said to his officers.

So the Egyptians set taskmasters over the Hebrews, and made them slaves. They carried their burdens, made bricks and mortar,

built their cities, and toiled in the fields. Their masters drove them to work with whips, and cared nothing for their lives.

But still they grew and increased. Their lives were bitter and their service hard, but the Egyptians could not keep down their numbers.

Then this wicked king formed a cruel plan.

"Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the river Nile, and every daughter you shall save alive," was the order given.

He would destroy them by killing every male child. The officers of Pharaoh were to search them out as fast as they were born and hurl them into the river. Thus the boys were sentenced to death even before they came into the world.

The twelve sons of Jacob and their children had grown into twelve tribes, numbering probably two million people. God had promised Jacob that the Chosen People should be led back to the Promised Land, from which he had fled to escape the famine.

This promise was now about to be kept, and Moses was chosen for the great task of setting his people free.

Moses is Born

When this oppression was at its height, Moses was born in the tribe of Levi. His mother had two other children, Miriam and Aaron, who were born before the cruel law had gone into effect.

Moses was a beautiful child, but he gave his mother no joy, for she knew that he was sentenced to die. One day the officers would find him—and then a horrible death.

She hid him three months; and then one day she saw the officers searching about, and knew that she could not conceal him much longer. At her wits' end, she thought of a plan to give her baby a chance for his life.

"I will put him in the river myself," she said. "It may be that God will send some kind-hearted Egyptian to find him, who will have pity and spare his life."

So this is what she did: she gathered reeds from the river and wove them into a little basket boat, and covered the bottom with pitch so that it would not leak. Then she dressed the baby in his best clothes, put him in the basket, carried him secretly to the brink of the river in the early morning, and left him floating among the reeds.

She sent his sister Miriam to play about the bank, and watch to see who would find him.

Then the poor mother went home and sat in her house and prayed. So the morning passed, and nothing happened. There she sat with beating heart, praying; the afternoon wore on—and then—Miriam came running into the house.

“Quick, mother! Come quick!”

The child was so excited that she could hardly tell her story. “A young lady came down to the river to bathe, and she saw the basket in the reeds. She told one of her maids to fetch it, and when she looked in the baby cried softly. Tears came into her eyes, and she said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children’; and I said, ‘Let me go and call a nurse to nurse the baby for you,’ and she smiled, and said, ‘Go!’ Come, quick, mother!”

When the mother drew near to the little group of women who were still admiring the baby, she saw that the young lady who had rescued her child was the royal princess—no less than the daughter of the king himself.

The princess looked at her and said, “Take care of this child, and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.”

So happy was she when she clasped her child safely in her arms again that she almost revealed who she was, but controlled herself just in time, bowed to the princess, and went away.

So Moses’ life was saved.

His mother took him home and nursed him, and taught him all the things a Hebrew child should know. He played with Miriam and Aaron; and in due time grew to be a strong and handsome lad.

Then his mother took him to the princess, who kept him under her protection as her foster son, and named him "Moses," because, she said, "I drew him out of the water."

So Moses was brought up at the royal court as a son of the princess, attending the schools, and becoming skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians. But he never forgot who he was, nor the lessons his mother taught him.

Moses Kills an Egyptian

After Moses had grown to be a man he often went out in the fields and watched the Hebrew slaves at their work. His pity was stirred, and his heart burned with anger as he saw their harsh treatment—how they were beaten and driven, sometimes even to death; but he controlled himself, for his time had not yet come.

Then a thing happened that changed his whole life.

One day, when he was forty years old, he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave most unmercifully.

Moses, who was a very strong man, lost all control of himself at the sight of the slave's suffering and struck the Egyptian a mighty blow, killing him instantly. Then he released the slave, and buried the dead man in the sand.

The next day he went out again, and saw two Hebrews fighting each other. He said to the man who was in the wrong, "Why do you strike him?"

"Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" the man replied. "Do you think to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

"Surely this is known," Moses said, fearfully.

He was not long in finding out that this was true, for word came to him that Pharaoh had heard of it, and threatened to kill him and that his officers had a warrant for his arrest. So there was nothing for Moses to do but to fly for his life.

He escaped across the Red Sea, into the land of Mid-i-an. Once across, the fugitive did not stop, but kept on into the heart

of the wilderness, where he felt himself safe; and one day, tired out, he sat down by a well to rest.

Now the well belonged to an Arab sheik, who was also a priest of Midian. This man, whose name was Jeth-ro, had seven daughters who tended and watched their father's flocks.

In the afternoon they came to draw water and fill the water troughs for the sheep. When the rough shepherds came they drove the girls away. Moses interfered and helped them water the flocks.

When the girls got home, their father asked, "How is it that you are home so soon to-day?"

"An Egyptian drove off the shepherds, and helped us draw water," they told him.

"Where is he? Why did you leave him there? Call him that he may eat bread with us."

Moses Becomes a Shepherd

So Moses came to Jethro's tent and was made welcome, and there he dwelt contentedly for many a day, and tended the sheep. The learned man of Egypt became a simple shepherd.

After a time, the good sheik liked him so well that he gave him one of his daughters, Zip-po-rah, in marriage.

The time spent with Jethro was not lost; for just as Moses had learned all the Egyptians could teach him, so he became skilled in all the lore of the wilderness. How to care for flocks and herds of the desert, how to trail and scout, where to find water, how to meet every danger—all these things he learned.

As the years went by he became a mighty man, able to face any danger—as much at home on the paths and trails of the desert, or in the cliffs and caves of the mountains of Sinai, as in the court of the Egyptian king.

How were things going in Egypt all this time? Often Moses thought about the plight of his people, and wondered, and looked in his own heart, and then at the sky; but there was no answer.

During these years the wicked king of Egypt had died, and a worse had arisen in his place, who added yet more to the misery of the people, so that their bitter cry went up to God. The time of their deliverance was at hand, although neither they nor Moses knew it.

The Burning Bush

Then one day, Moses led his flock far from the tents of his father-in-law Jethro, to find pasturage, and he came to the back of the wilderness, to the mountain of God, Mount Sinai. And he was there alone with his sheep.

In the stillness of a quiet afternoon he sat at the foot of the mountain, thinking of his oppressed people in far-off Egypt. He looked up at the lofty heights, but there was no help. There he sat, a strong man tending sheep, while his people were being tormented.

Suddenly a bright light appeared off to one side. A bush had burst into a flame of fire. He looked, and lo, the fire burned, but the bush was not consumed.

"I will go and see this great sight," he said to himself; "why the bush is not burned."

And he hurried to the spot, with his shepherd's rod in his hand.

As he drew near, a voice called to him out of the midst of the fire, and said, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here am I," he replied.

"Come not too near," the voice said. "Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground."

"I am the God of your fathers," the voice went on; "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob."

Moses hid his face with his mantle, for he was afraid to look upon God.

"I have surely seen the suffering of my people, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters," the Lord said: "and



A VOICE CALLED TO HIM OUT OF THE MIDST OF THE FIRE, AND SAID, "MOSES! MOSES!"

I am now come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may lead my people out of Egypt."

"Who am I, O Lord," Moses replied, "that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

"Certainly I will be with you," the Lord said, "and this shall be a token that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain."

Moses stood there hiding his face, for he was afraid to look upon the brightness of the flame.

"Behold, when I come to my people and say, 'The God of your fathers sent me,' and they ask, 'What is his name?' what shall I say?"

God said unto Moses:

"I AM THAT I AM. Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you. The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name, and this is my memorial for ever.

"Go to the elders of Israel and say: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done in Egypt; and I will bring you out of slavery into a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

When the Lord left off speaking, Moses uncovered his face, no longer afraid. The flame of fire had vanished, and the bush was as before. He put on his shoes, grasped his rod, called to his sheep, and set off on his return to the tents of Jethro.

"Let me go, I pray you," he said to Jethro, "and return to my people in Egypt, to see whether they are yet alive."

"Go in peace," Jethro replied.

Forty years had passed since Moses had fled for his life, and

now he was to return—but not alone. His brother, Aaron, who had lived in Egypt all this time, was sent to accompany him.

Moses and Aaron

“Go into the wilderness to meet Moses,” the Lord said to Aaron.

Aaron did so, and Moses met him in the wilderness, and the brothers kissed each other. Moses told Aaron the words of the Lord, and all the signs which he had given him. Then together they set out for Egypt.

When they reached Goshen, they called together the elders of the twelve tribes and told them that God had seen the sufferings of his people, and was now about to deliver them. When the people heard the good news, and saw the signs, they believed, and bowed their heads and worshiped.

Afterwards Moses and Aaron presented themselves at the royal palace, and stood before the king. Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three; the one a shepherd, the other a slave.

“O king,” said Aaron, boldly, “thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.’ ”

“Who is the Lord,” said Pharaoh scornfully, “that I should listen to him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord; and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

“The God of the Hebrews has met with us,” Aaron replied. “Let us go, we pray you, three days’ journey into the wilderness, to sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.”

“Why should you, Moses and Aaron, release the people from their work?” the king demanded sternly. “Get you to your burdens!”

The interview was at an end, and the two men went out.

The same day Pharaoh issued a cruel order to the taskmasters, for he was very angry; and this was the order:

"Give the people no more straw to make bricks, as you have always done; let them gather their own straw. But compel them to make the same number of bricks as before. They are idle, that is why they cry, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Lay heavier work upon them, and let them not listen to lying words."

Now, each gang of brick makers was in charge of a Hebrew officer and the taskmasters were over them. When the officers did not deliver the full number of bricks, the taskmasters demanded, "Why do you not deliver bricks as before?" and beat them with whips.

Then the officers appealed to Pharaoh, who only laughed and said, "You are idle, that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' Go back to your work; for there shall no straw be given you, and you shall deliver the same number of bricks."

The Hebrew officers saw that they were in a bad way.

"The Lord look upon you and judge," they said to Moses and Aaron who were waiting for them when they came out. "You have made Pharaoh and his taskmasters hate us, and put a sword in their hand to slay us."

Moses could make no reply. He went away and communed with God.

"Why have you sent me?" he asked. "Since I spoke to Pharaoh, he has treated the people worse than before."

So God strengthened Moses and showed him what to do.

"Go to the Children of Israel," he said, "and say to them, 'I am JEHOVAH; I will keep the promise I made to your fathers: I will rid you of your bondage; I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.'"

Moses obeyed; but the people would not listen. They were in an agony of spirit, and their cries filled the land, so cruel were their taskmasters.

At God's command, Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh a second time and asked him to let the people go.

The king laughed scornfully as before, and said, "Show a wonder for you."

Aaron took his rod and threw it on the ground before the king, and it became a serpent. Then the king called in his magicians, and they cast down their rods which became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

But Pharaoh's heart was very hard, and he refused their request.



THE FROGS CAME UP AND COVERED THE LAND

VIII

THE TEN PLAGUES

1. *The River of Blood*

THE next morning the king with his retinue went down to the water to bathe, according to his custom, and there were Moses and Aaron standing on the river's brink waiting for him.

"What are those men doing here?" asked the king, glancing at them angrily.

"The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent us to say, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness,'" said Aaron, stepping forward; "and you have not listened to him. The Lord says, 'By this you shall know that I am the Lord: I will strike the river and its waters shall be turned to blood.'"

"Show me a wonder!" sneered the king.

At this, Moses spoke to Aaron. Aaron lifted his rod high in the air and struck the water in the sight of Pharaoh and his men.

Slowly the water turned red at the place where it was struck, and the redness spread until the whole river ran red as blood before their startled eyes.

At first the king was puzzled, and then his face grew hard.

"Go fetch the magicians," he ordered an attendant curtly, who ran to do his bidding.

Presently the magicians came, bearing a vessel of water. They placed the vessel on the ground before the king, waved their magic wand over it, and slowly the water turned red like the water in the river.

"Nothing very wonderful about that," said the king, with a look of triumph at Moses and Aaron, as he turned and went back to his palace, his heart as stubborn as before.

But he lost his bath that morning and for some mornings after.

Now the water in the river was not fit to drink, for it was full of dead fish, and the vile odor of them filled the air. The people suffered from thirst. To make the matter worse, this river was sacred to the Egyptians, and they worshiped it; and as they dug along its banks to get water, they called on their gods to punish Moses and Aaron for polluting the sacred stream.

Seven days passed before the river ran clear again and the water was fit to drink.

2. The Plague of Frogs

Instead of seeing the hand of God in the signs and wonders of the river, the Egyptians blamed their slaves and treated them more cruelly, if that were possible, than before.

At God's command, Moses and Aaron stood before the king in his palace; and Aaron again addressed him:

"Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me. If you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all your borders with frogs.' "

"Go, do your worst," said the king with an evil laugh.

He was not afraid of frogs, and he knew that if he could conquer these two wonder-workers, his slaves would cause him no more trouble.

The two men left the palace, followed by the mocking eyes of the king's courtiers and servants, and made their way to the river.

Aaron stretched out his rod over the water, and the frogs came up and covered the land. From the rivers and streams and pools they came in troops and swarms, and the air was filled with their croaking.

When Pharaoh heard of it, he sent for the magicians, who also managed by their enchantments to bring up a few frogs out of the pool that was in the palace yard.

But the magicians were not able to send them back, for the land was alive with frogs. They swarmed into the palace and into the people's houses and overran them. They entered the bedchambers and leaped upon the beds; into the kitchens, and leaped into the ovens and into the kneading pans in which the women were mixing bread. The doors and windows could not keep them out, there were so many. They leaped upon the king and upon his people, so that it was past endurance.

When the king could stand the plague no longer, he sent for Moses and Aaron.

"Entreat the Lord," he said, "to take away the frogs, and and I will let your people go to sacrifice unto the Lord."

"I will entreat him," Moses replied. "When shall I ask that the frogs be destroyed, and remain in the river only?"

"To-morrow," answered Pharaoh.

"Be it according to your word; that you may know that there is none like the Lord our God."

The men went out from Pharaoh, and on the morrow the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses and out of the palace, and out of the fields. And the people gathered the dead frogs in heaps and buried them, and the air was filled with the stench.

Did Pharaoh keep his promise? Not he. When he saw that there was relief from the plague, his heart grew hard again, as the Lord had foretold.

3. *The Plague of Lice*

Yet another sign that God was master of nature was given to the Egyptians, and that without warning.

The Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout the land of Egypt.'"

Aaron did so; and the dust bred lice, and the pest was upon man and beast from one end of Egypt to the other, so that they had no rest either night or day.

The vermin came upon Pharaoh himself, and filled the palace, for lice have no more respect for a king than for a slave.

"Send for the magicians," cried the king in disgust.

The magicians came, but the lice were too many for them; they were not able either to bring them forth or to send them away. Even while they were trying to do so, their own garments were thick with lice.

"O king, this is the finger of God," they said solemnly.

The king would not listen, but drove them out of the court.

"Is the great king of Egypt to be conquered by lice?" he asked himself.

So his heart grew still harder, as the Lord had foretold.

4. *The Plague of Flies*

One morning, soon after the lice had vanished, Pharaoh rose up early and went down to the river for his morning bath. Early as he was, Moses and Aaron were there before him.

The king halted as they faced him, and Aaron raised his hand and said:

"Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else, I will send swarms of flies upon you, and upon your servants.'"

"Beware how you threaten me!" The king waved him aside angrily and plunged into the river.

The two men went away; they knew what they had to do.

"Flies, indeed! Who is the king of Egypt to be afraid of a few flies!" the king said to himself; and even as he said it the flies buzzed about his head.

All that day the air was still and the flies multiplied; and the people said to one another, "A breeze will soon spring up and blow them away."

But on the morrow they knew better. The air was thick with flies. They swarmed into the palace, and into the servants' houses; they lighted on the food they ate, and were drowned in the liquid they drank, so that everything was corrupted by the swarms of flies. The people could not defend themselves against them; they had no peace, either day or night.

In the court the slaves stood about their royal master and fanned him with great fans, and beat off the flies, but fan as they might, they could not protect him or themselves, for the winged pests buzzed about him until he grew mad with rage; and the magicians were as helpless as the king.

Then a strange thing happened; word was brought to the king that there were no flies in the land of Goshen. The persecuted slaves were free from flies; only the Egyptians were afflicted.

The king could stand it no longer; he sent for Moses and Aaron in haste.

Soon the two men stood before him. The king and his courtiers looked at them in amazement, and well they might, for although the chamber was full of flies—they flew into the king's mouth as he opened it, and into his eyes and ears and nose—not a fly lighted on Moses and Aaron. While his slaves were fighting to protect him, the two men stood before him untouched.

"Go, sacrifice to your God in this land," cried the tormented king, almost beside himself with anger.

"It is not right so to do," Moses answered. "If we sacrifice before the eyes of the Egyptians, will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he commands us."

"I will let you go," Pharaoh answered; "only you must not go very far away; entreat for me."

"I will entreat the Lord," Moses replied; "only let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go."

Then Moses and Aaron left the court, and on the morrow the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, and from his servants, and from his people.

Now when the plague of flies was gone and Pharaoh had rest, it seemed to him but a dream.

"What a fool I was to be conquered by flies," he said.

So he hardened his heart this time also.

5. *The Murrain*

When Moses saw that Pharaoh was a man of words and not of deeds, he and Aaron stood before him again, and said:

"Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let my people go, that they may serve me.' For if you refuse, and hold them, behold, the hand of the Lord shall be upon your cattle in the field, and they shall suffer with a very grievous disease."

"Moses and Aaron, you are wonderful magicians," answered the king, "but Pharaoh is greater than the magicians. All that you have done so far is to make the lot of your people worse. Beware!" and he waved them from his presence.

On the morrow a strange disease appeared among the flocks and herds, and it spread to the horses and the asses and the camels. Soon it became epidemic, and the animals began to die. All the doctors could do nothing, for they did not understand it; and the rich and poor suffered alike.

Pharaoh sent messengers to the land of Goshen, who soon brought back the report that the cattle of the Israelites were well; not so much as one of them had died.

He sent learned professors from the university to find out the reason, but they returned no wiser than they went.

"We have had cattle diseases before; this, too, will run its course and die out," they said.

Pharaoh agreed, for his heart was stubborn. He said to himself, "I should be a pretty king to let my slaves triumph over me." So he did not let the people go.

6. The Plague of Boils

One by one the signs were coming closer and closer home to Pharaoh. The fifth attacked his people's cattle; the sixth was to attack their bodies, and that without warning.

One day as Pharaoh was leaving his palace, Moses and Aaron stood before him. In their hands they held fine ashes, just as they came from the furnace. The king and his attendants paused, curious to see what new thing these Hebrew wonder-workers would do.

He did not have to wait long. Without a word, the two men stepped before the king and sprinkled the ashes toward heaven, and watched as the wind blew them over the land. Then they turned and went their way.

"What new folly is this?" asked the king.

He and his people were soon to know, for that same day their flesh began to blister, and to swell painfully. The next day Pharaoh's officers brought report that boils were breaking out on man and beast.

The king summoned his magicians and would have sent for Moses, but the magicians said, "O king, call him not; we cannot stand before him."

The magicians themselves were covered with boils, and well they knew that Moses would put them to shame.

The king waited to see what would happen. The boils did not prove fatal; no one died, and soon the people began to recover.

So Pharaoh lost his fear, and would not listen to Moses, but hardened his heart as before.

7. The Plague of Hail

In the seventh sign God was to display his power over nature in a manner far more striking than in the other six.

The king was given fair warning so that he might save his cattle, and even escape the danger altogether, had he wished.

Early in the morning Moses and Aaron met the king on his way to the river, and Moses addressed him more sternly than ever before:

“Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues upon you, and upon your people; that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. Before now, I might have cut you and your people from off the earth: but I have spared you that I might show my power, and that my name may be declared in all the earth. Do you still refuse to let my people go? Behold, about this time to-morrow I will send a great hail storm such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded until now. Therefore, bring home every man and beast from the field, for those that are not brought home shall die in the storm.’ ”

The king laughed haughtily, and heeded not the warning.

“Who ever heard of such a hail storm in Egypt?” he said.

Many of Pharaoh’s servants who heard the words of Moses believed, and brought home their men and cattle to safety; but those who heard and did not believe left them in the field.

The next morning Moses and Aaron rose up early, and went outside the city. The sun was shining; not a cloud hung in the sky.

Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; the clouds came up, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran along the ground. So there was hail, and fire mingled with hail, very terrible, such as had never been seen in all the land of Egypt before.

The hail struck down all that were in the field, both man and beast. The crops were beaten down, the branches of the trees broken off, and the ruin was very great.

So the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt all that day;

only in the land of Goshen where Moses' people lived, there was no hail.

All the long morning the king and his courtiers sat in the palace and watched the havoc of the storm. They saw the great hailstones beating down everything in the palace yard; they saw the terrific blaze of the lightning and heard the mighty crash of the thunder, and they said to one another, "Such a tempest cannot last, it must soon be over."

The tempest did not abate; it increased in fury as the afternoon wore on, and fear gripped the hard heart of the king for the first time.

In his alarm he sent for Moses and Aaron, who were not far away; for they knew what was happening in the court as well as if they had been there.

"I have sinned this time," Pharaoh confessed; "the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord; for there has been enough of these mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and will hold you no longer."

"As soon as I am gone out of the city," Moses replied, "I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; the thunders shall cease, and there shall be no more hail; that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the Lord."

Even as he spoke a flash of lightning lit up the scene, and a mighty peal of thunder shook the palace, so that it rocked on its foundations.

As soon as Moses and Aaron were outside the city, Moses spread abroad his hands unto the Lord, and the thunder and hail ceased, and the rain stopped.

Now when Pharaoh saw that the storm was over and that the danger was past, he and his courtiers became obstinate as before; as Moses had told them they would. It was nothing to them that men and cattle lay dead in the fields; they themselves were safe.

"Pshaw!" they said. "It was nothing but a bad storm."

8. The Plague of Locusts

When Moses and Aaron saw that the king did not intend to keep his word, they returned to the palace, and warned the king yet again.

“Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to let my people go, that they may serve me? Behold, to-morrow I will bring locusts into your borders; they shall cover the face of the earth, and that which escaped the hail shall the locusts eat.’ ”

The two men turned, and went out from Pharaoh. Now the violence of the storm had destroyed much property, and the courtiers well knew that what the hail had begun, the locusts would finish.

“How long shall this man be a snare to us?” they said as soon as Moses was past the door. “Let the people go, that they may serve their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is ruined?”

So the king sent a messenger after Moses and Aaron and brought them back.

“Go, serve the Lord your God,” he said to them; “but who are they that shall go?”

“We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord,” Moses replied.

“I will let you go, you and your little ones; but look to it, for evil is before you,” said the king.

Then the headstrong ruler changed his mind, and added in a burst of anger, “No, not so; take only the men, and go, for that is what you desire;” and he ordered his guards to drive the two men out of the palace.

On the morrow Moses stretched out his rod over Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night, and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts.

They rode on the wind in battalions, in regiments, and in armies, and covered the face of the ground, so that it was darkened.

They ate the fruits and the leaves of the trees, and every green thing. After they had passed over a field, the ground and the trees were stripped bare as in winter. They moved with a whizzing sound, and the Egyptians could not stand before them.

Beside themselves with terror, they ran to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste.

"I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you," he confessed again. "Now therefore, forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God that he may take away from me this death only."

The two men went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord; and the Lord caused an exceeding strong west wind to blow up, which lifted the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea, where they were drowned. Not one locust was left alive in all the borders of Egypt.

Time after time Pharaoh in his distress had called for the help of Moses, and time after time Moses had come to his relief. But this kindness, instead of bringing him to his senses, only served to make him more stubborn than before.

So he would not let the people go.

9. The Plague of Darkness

The Egyptians worshiped many idols, among them the sun-god; and now the God of the Hebrews was to show his power over the sun also.

Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven in the broad light of day; and without warning, a darkness descended and covered the land, a darkness so thick that it could be felt. For three days and three nights the light of the sun, moon, and stars was shut out. The people could not see one another's faces, nor move about without stumbling. Moreover, a strange terror came

upon them, for they thought the sun-god was angry with them; but Pharaoh and his court knew better.

Only the Children of Israel had light in their huts.

On the morning of the third day the king sent for Moses and Aaron once more. His angry face was strangely lit up by the feeble light of an oil lamp held before him by a slave.

"Go, serve the Lord," he said; "only let your flocks and herds remain behind; let your little ones also go with you."

Moses replied sternly, for the time for trifling was past, "Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for we must take them to sacrifice to the Lord our God."

"Get you from me!" cried Pharaoh in a voice of fury. "Take heed to yourself; see my face no more; for in that day you shall die!"

Moses had warned Pharaoh many times of the plagues about to come, but Pharaoh only threatened him with death upon sight. He would have killed him then and there had he dared.

"You have spoken well," answered Moses, without a sign of fear; "I will see your face no more."

He paused, as if about to go—then drew himself to his full height and looked Pharaoh in the eyes.

"Proud king," he said, "I will warn you for the last time; thus says the Lord, 'About midnight all the first-born of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh, the king on his throne, to the first-born of the slave who grinds at the mill.'

"'But against the Children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, that you may know that the Lord does put a difference between Egypt and Israel; and these courtiers of yours shall come and bow down to me, and say, Go out and all your people with you!'"

With a last look at the king, Moses turned and went out in hot anger, and Aaron with him. Moses kept his word; he never did see the king's face again.

The king and his courtiers sat there in the darkness, half

afraid. Then suddenly the darkness lifted; the three days were up, and the sun shone as before. The king laughed scornfully and his courtiers with him.

"Truly," he said, "this Moses is a great wonder-worker, but who is he to have the power of life and death?"

10. The Plague of Death

When the two brothers left the court for the last time they knew the day had come to strike the final blow for freedom. Pharaoh would do nothing.

At God's command, Moses had multiplied signs and wonders before him, all to no purpose; and Moses had become a very great man in the sight of the Egyptians, respected and feared throughout the land.

Instead of showing mercy, the cruel king had become more and more determined not to let the people go. He had added to their burdens until their sufferings made their lives a misery. From morning to night they were whipped, beaten, and driven by their cruel taskmasters. Even the sight of the sufferings of his own people under the plagues had not melted Pharaoh's heart.

Now the great crisis had come; the day of deliverance was at hand.

Moses dared not lead his people against the mighty armies of Pharaoh. To do so would be to lead them to slaughter; he must find another way. So God told him what to do. In obedience to God's word, Moses had sent for the leaders of each tribe some days before, and had given them secret instructions.

"On the tenth day of this month," he said, "let every household select a lamb or a kid and keep it until the fourteenth day of the month. Let the households that are too little to provide a lamb unite with their neighbors. On the fourteenth night will be the passover, for in that night the Lord will strike terror into the hearts of the Egyptians, so that they will beg you to depart before a worse fate befall them."

Swift messengers had carried the news throughout the land of Goshen; everything was now ready. The day had come. No time was to be lost. Moses and Aaron went directly from Pharaoh to the leaders of the tribes and gave them final orders.

"Take your lambs according to your families, and kill the passover lamb and save the blood in a basin. Let the head of each house take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood and sprinkle the lintel over the door, and the two door posts, with the blood; and let no one go out of the door until the morning; for the blood on the door shall be a sign, and the death angel shall pass over."

The news spread almost as if by wireless. The lamb was killed at dark, and under cover of darkness the blood was sprinkled on each door.

The lamb was roasted and the people ate, fully dressed, with shoes on and staff in hand. After they had eaten they sat in silence and waited quietly in their houses. Midnight came; the death angel passed over; and then they heard wailing and crying.

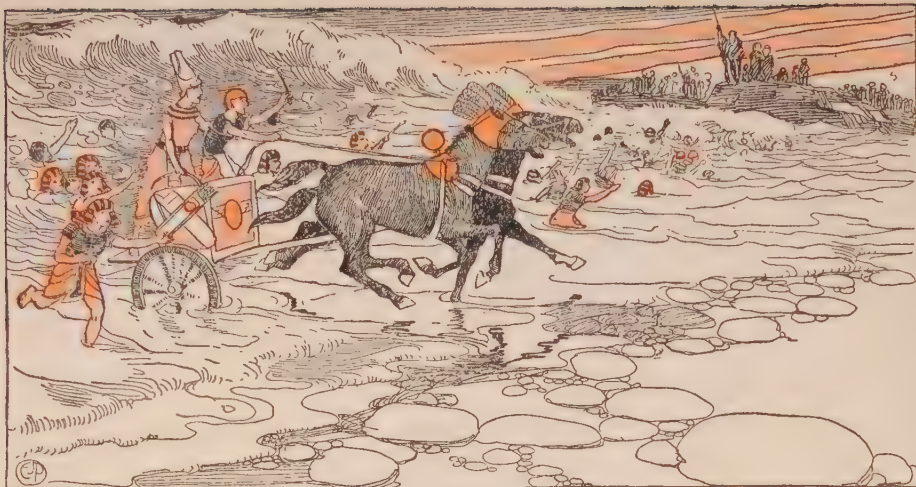
The first born of the Egyptians were slain. The people came and offered their silver and gold jewels, and begged the Israelites, "Depart or we are all dead men!"

Pharaoh was awakened in the night; his oldest son, the prince, lay dead in the palace. He hurriedly sent messengers to Moses.

"Rise up, get you out from among my people, both you and the Children of Israel; go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take both your flocks and your herds and be gone; and bless me also."

When the king's own son lay dead, his hard heart was softened, his proud spirit was broken at last—too late.

In their terror, the Egyptians thrust jewels of silver and gold, and clothing upon the Hebrews, willing to purchase their speedy departure at any price. So the wages of the slaves, or at least part of them, were paid.



THE EGYPTIANS TRIED TO ESCAPE, BUT WERE OVERTHROWN IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA

IX

THE FLIGHT FROM EGYPT

Crossing the Red Sea

AT last the slaves were on the march, and freedom was in sight.

The rendezvous was the city of Ram-e-ses, the city of bricks which they had built under the lash of their taskmasters. About its walls they gathered for their hasty flight.

They numbered six hundred thousand men, besides women and children. All their possessions they carried on their shoulders or on the backs of their cattle. They had some flocks and herds; and, besides, the wealth of money and of clothing the terrified Egyptians had only too gladly given them.

Their pans of unleavened dough were carried on their shoulders; there had been no time to bake it.

They were all slaves, many of them with the wounds of the lash still upon them. The heads of the tribes were slaves; even Aaron was a slave. The only man among them who had tasted freedom was Moses, their great champion and leader. He marched

at their head and directed them. With him was the body of Joseph, who, many years before, as he lay dying, had made the Children of Israel promise to carry his bones with them.

Thus the motley horde journeyed all that night, and the next day, as fast as the children and cattle could travel, until in the afternoon they came to Suc-coth, the place of tents, where Jacob had pitched his tent so many years before. Here they baked their unleavened bread.

The next day they took up their journey again in better order, and encamped at E-tham, on the edge of the wilderness.

Only Moses and Aaron and Miriam, their sister, and a few of the leaders, knew that they were really in flight from Egypt; most of them thought that they were going into the wilderness to sacrifice, although wild rumors flew about the camp.

But they knew they were under divine protection; for a great wonder was before them; a tall pillar of cloud led them by day, and when night fell this pillar-cloud glowed with fire and gave them light.

The way of the wilderness was the shortest way to the Promised Land, but that lay through the Philistine country, and the Philistines were a warlike people with whom the slaves were in no condition to fight.

So the Lord said to Moses, "Lead them not that way lest they become terrified when they see war, and return to Egypt. Turn back and encamp between Mig-dol and the sea, for Pharaoh is not even yet ready to let you go."

News of the flight was soon brought to the king, and instead of being glad that the slaves were gone, his heart and the hearts of his advisers grew hard again. He was not satisfied, but sought revenge.

He had been made to yield against his will. Now he saw that the fugitives were shut in by mountains and rocks and the sea. It looked to him as if they had walked into a trap from which they could not escape.

"What is this we have done," he said, "that we should let our slaves go free?"

Ordering out his men and taking six hundred of his swiftest chariots with him, he set off in pursuit.

The camp of the Israelites lay beside the sea, and the hills shut them in. "They cannot escape; they are trapped!" cried the king, as chariots and horsemen overtook them in this dangerous place.

When the runaways saw the Egyptians driving fiercely upon them, they were terrified, as well they might be, and came running to Moses.

"Are there no graves in Egypt, that you should lead us into the wilderness to die?" they cried. "It is better for us to live and serve the Egyptians than to be slain here."

"Do not fear," commanded Moses. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you; the Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall see no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

It was well, for they were at the mercy of the hosts of Pharaoh.

"Why do you cry to me?" the Lord said to Moses. "Speak unto the Children of Israel, that they go forward. Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it; and the Children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground."

It was night when the king and his chariots arrived in sight of the slaves; and they encamped, secure of their prey, to wait for the morning light.

Now a strange thing happened. The angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind, and came between the two camps; and the pillar of cloud cast darkness over the camp of Egypt, but it cast light over the camp of Israel, and neither came near the other all night.

When Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea, a strong east wind began to blow; and, as the wind blew, the sea rolled back, the dry land appeared, and the waters were divided.

Under the great searchlight of the pillar of fire the slaves marched over the bed of the sea, and drove their cattle before them as upon dry ground. Silently and surely they crossed all night, and still the wind blew steadily and held the waters back upon the right and upon the left of the wide path.

In the morning watch, Pharaoh's spies discovered the escaping slaves. The king was beside himself with rage, and lost his reason. "They shall not escape!" he shouted. "Forward! After them!"

But the chariots which ran so swiftly upon the hard ground, were no match for the wet sand, which either tore off their wheels, or made them drag heavily.

Still the pursuers kept on; they would not give up; they lashed their horses, and the horsemen themselves plunged in, but the feet of the horses sank in the soft sand, and soon Pharaoh's men were caught between the waters above and the waters below, struggling helplessly in the bottom of the sea.

They cried out to Pharaoh, "Let us flee from them; their God fights for them against the Egyptians!"

But they could neither go back nor go forward. The sea bottom held them fast.

At last all the Hebrews were across in safety, and Moses stood upon the far bank watching their pursuers.

"Stretch out your hand over the sea," the Lord said to Moses, "that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen."

Moses stretched out his hand; and the wind died down, and the sea returned to its place as the morning light appeared. The Egyptians tried to escape, but were overthrown in the midst of the sea; and the waters closed over the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that followed after them; and all were drowned. There remained not so much as one of them alive.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and the people saw the Egyptians washed up dead

upon the seashore. They saw the great work which the Lord did upon their enemies, and they feared the Lord, and believed in him, and in his servant Moses.

Then Moses sang a song of praise unto the Lord:

“I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously:

The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The Lord is my strength and my song,

And he is become my salvation:

This is my God, and I will praise him;

My father’s God, and I will exalt him.”

And Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam sang the refrain:

“Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;

The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

* * * * *

When their aunt closed her Bible, which she had held while telling how the Chosen People escaped from slavery, the little girl exclaimed, “Oh, Aunt, just look at the clock! It is long past bedtime; but none of us heard it strike—we were so far away, away down in Egypt with the Children of Israel.”

“Away down in Egypt,” repeated the old lady, dreamily. “Yes, children, and thousands of years away, too—but come, this will never do! To bed, my dears! Kiss me good-night.”

“My,” thought the little girl, as she ran upstairs, “I believe, yes, I do believe that, since we’ve been telling Bible stories, Aunt Maria loves us better than ever before; and I know we love her ever and ever so much more.”

Billy lay awake a long time, and when he fell asleep he dreamed of the wonders of which he had heard.

Wandering in the Desert

"What happened after the Children of Israel were safely across the Red Sea?" Billy asked his aunt the next morning at breakfast. "Did they know where to go? Where were they? Were they near the Promised Land?"

"No, they were miles and years away," replied his aunt, smiling at the boy's eager questions. "It was forty long years before they were strong enough to conquer the enemies that lay between them and the Promised Land. You must remember that they had been slaves and had to be trained to act like free men.

"Soon they began to be hungry and thirsty, out there in the desert, and begged Moses to lead them back to Egypt where they had had plenty to eat. Then God sent them manna from heaven to feed them, and caused water to flow out of the rock for them to drink. The manna was a small seed-like food which they found on the ground every morning as long as they were on their journey.

"When they met enemies, Moses sent Joshua and the bravest of the young Hebrews to fight them. Joshua afterwards became their leader. At the end of three months, they arrived at Mount Sinai, where God had first appeared to Moses. There God gave them the Ten Commandments."

"Oh, yes, I know," interrupted Mary Frances; "we learned the Ten Commandments in Sunday school, and all about the tables of stone on which they were written."

"Isn't that splendid," said her aunt, opening her Bible at the twentieth chapter of Exodus; "perhaps you can repeat them together."

So the children repeated them in the shortened form they had learned.

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's.

"I doubt if I could have done as well as that when I was your age," exclaimed the old lady, much pleased.

"You would think," she went on, "that the Children of Israel would never have turned aside from the true God after hearing those wonderful words; but they did.

"Not long after they were given the commandments, Moses went up into Mount Sinai to receive directions for building their tabernacle, or tent of meeting, and for making the ark, a beautiful chest which was to contain the tables of stone on which the commandments were written. While he was gone, they made a golden calf and worshiped it.

"After that, they rebelled again and again, showing how unprepared they were to face the dangers before them. So God kept them wandering in the wilderness for forty years, until all the men and women who had been slaves in Egypt were dead, and a new race of free men and women had sprung up. Of the grown men who came out of Egypt, only two, besides Moses, remained alive. These two were Caleb and Joshua, who had always been loyal to their great leader. Even Aaron was dead.

"At last Moses led his people to the borders of Canaan, which was the Promised Land. Calling the people together in the plains of Moab on the banks of the river Jordan, he told them that God's promise to Abraham was now about to be kept, that he himself was about to die, and that Joshua was to be their new leader.

“After that, he went up to the top of Mount Pis-gah, which is near Jer-i-cho, and God showed him the good land across the river Jordan that his people were to enter and possess; and there the great leader died.”

Aunt Maria opened her Bible at the last chapter of the Book of Deu-ter-on-o-my. “Listen, children, as I read,” she said.

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

“And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

“And the Children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.”

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF PROMISE



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

—JOSHUA 1: 9.



"SUN, STAND THOU STILL UPON GIBEON," CRIED JOSHUA

X

JOSHUA, THE MAN OF COURAGE

IT was several days before the children had finished the chapters in the Book of Joshua which their aunt had told them to read. Then, turning to the pages of Uncle Ben's book, they were delighted to find the brave leader telling his own story as if he were speaking to them himself.

* * * * *

Into the Promised Land

Now, after the death of Moses, the Lord spoke to me, whom Moses had appointed leader.

"Moses my servant is dead," was the message. "Now therefore, rise up and cross the river Jor-dan with all this people to the land that I promised them.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon have I given you. No man shall be able to stand against you all the

136 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you.

“Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, nor dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Then I gave this order to my officers:

“Command the people to prepare food, for within three days you shall cross the river Jordan, and go in to possess the land which the Lord your God has given you.”

I sent two men across the river to Jericho to spy out the land. After narrowly escaping with their lives, the spies returned and reported that the whole land was in terror of our coming.

When all was ready, I said to the priests:

“Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people.”

I then ordered the advance, and the priests, bearing the ark, went before the people. As soon as their feet touched the water the priests stood still. Then the waters of the river which came down from above, stood and rose in a heap, and the waters below ran down into the Dead Sea, and the priests who carried the ark stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the river.

About forty thousand men armed for battle went over first, and encamped on the plains of Jericho, and the rest of the people followed them.

As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests touched the shore, the waters of the river returned to their place, and flowed between its banks, as before.

So the people crossed safely over the Jordan on dry land.

The Capture of Jericho

Now, no one was able to go into Jericho, or to come out, because of the Children of Israel.

“See,” the Lord said to me, “I have given the city into your hand. You shall compass it with all your men of war, and go round the wall once every day for six days.

“Seven priests shall go before the ark, having seven trumpets of rams’ horns, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets; and the seventh day you shall go round the city seven times.

“The last time, when the priests blow a long blast with the trumpets, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and all the people shall go up, every man straight before him into the city.”

Thus the seven priests with the seven trumpets passed on before the Lord, and blew their trumpets, and the priests bearing the ark of the Lord followed them.

An advance guard of armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets, and the great host of people formed a guard behind.

So, on the first day, the Children of Israel, bearing the ark of the Lord, encircled the city of Jericho once, and returned to camp.

The second day, they encircled the city once, and returned to camp; and so they did for six days.

The seventh day they rose up early at the dawning of the day, and encircled the city in the same manner seven times.

At the seventh time, when the priests blew a long blast with the trumpets, I gave the order: “Shout! The Lord has given you the city!”

So the people shouted while the priests blew the long blast, and it came to pass, when they all shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, and the people rushed up, every man straight before him, and captured the city.

The Crafty Men of Gibeon

When the kings who ruled in the hill country heard what had been done in Jericho, they banded together with one accord to fight against Israel.

But the people of Gib-e-on, a city near Jerusalem, thought it better to make peace rather than war, so they tried to work craftily.

138 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

One day a small company of their men, wearing old shoes and torn garments, came into our camp at Gil-gal.

"We are come from a far country," they said, "to make peace with you."

"Perhaps you dwell near us; how then can we make peace with you?" I asked.

"We are your servants," they replied.

"Who are you? And where do you come from?" I asked again.

"Your servants have come from a very far country, because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, and beyond the Jordan.

"Our people said to us, 'Take food for your journey and go to meet them, and say, we are your servants; now make peace with us.'

"This is our bread which we took hot from the oven; but now, see how dry and mouldy it is. See how old and worn our garments and shoes have become by reason of our long journey."

Believing their story, we made peace with them, and sent them away.

At the end of three days, we found out that they had been only pretending to come from a far country. They were neighbors, and dwelt so near that we reached their city on the third day.

Now the people were very angry when they discovered the craft of the men of Gibeon, but the princes of the congregation replied, "We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, therefore we may not touch them."

"Why have you deceived us?" I asked the men of Gibeon.

"Because we have heard how the Lord God commanded his servant Moses to give you all this land; therefore we were sore afraid for our lives. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you."

So I spared their lives because of our pledge, but I made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord.

Five Kings in a Cave

Now when the king of Je-ru-sa-lem heard how the people of Gibeon had made peace with Israel he feared greatly; because Gibeon was a great city, and its men were mighty.

So the king of Jerusalem sent this message to the king of Hebron, and to the king of Jar-muth, and to the king of Lach-ish, and to the king of Eg-lon:

"Come up and help me to punish Gibeon for making peace with Joshua and the Children of Israel."

Then all those five kings assembled their troops and encamped before Gibeon to make war against it.

Upon this, the men of Gibeon sent messengers in haste to our camp at Gilgal.

"Come up quickly," was their message, "for the five kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains are gathered against us."

So I assembled my troops, all my mighty men of valor, to go to their aid.

"Do not fear them," the Lord said to me, "for I have delivered them into your hand; there shall not a man of them stand before you."

Setting out from Gilgal, we marched all night, and came upon the armies of the five kings suddenly, and put them to flight.

As they fled before our men, the Lord rained down great hailstones from heaven, so that more died from the hailstones than our men slew with the sword.

Then I cried to the Lord on that day:

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon."
And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,
Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

As we pursued them, a soldier came running and said to me, "The five kings have fled and hid themselves in a cave."

140 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

“Roll great stones before the mouth of the cave,” I ordered; “and set a guard by it; but pursue their men, for the Lord has delivered them into our hand.”

When all our enemies were scattered or slain, we returned from the pursuit, and camped near the cave of the captured kings.

“Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings,” I ordered my men, the next day.

So they brought them out.

Then I said to the captains of the men of war, “Come near; put your feet upon the necks of these kings.”

When they had done this, I said to all the people, “Do not fear, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies.”

Now if those five heathen kings had defeated us, we should have all been slain or driven out of the Promised Land, and with us the knowledge of the true God.

Therefore I commanded them to be slain and hanged on five trees, and they were there until evening.

At the time of the going down of the sun, I commanded that they be taken down and laid in the cave where they had hid, and that great stones be laid upon the cave’s mouth. And this was done.

The Death of Joshua

After we had conquered all the country of the hills, and of the South, and had made room for ourselves where we might serve the God of Israel, I divided the land among the twelve tribes.

After the Lord had given us rest from our enemies for a long time I began to grow old. I was more than eighty years of age when we crossed the Jordan, and now I was nearly one hundred and ten, and my days were growing short.

So I gathered all the tribes together at Shechem, and called for the chief men, and for the officers and judges, and they presented themselves before God.

Then I told the people once more what the Lord, the God of Israel, had done for them. I reminded them of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and of the going down into Egypt, and of Joseph; and of Moses, and the deliverance from Egypt.

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord," I said, "and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river, and in Egypt; and serve the Lord. If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Then the people all said, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

* * * * *

With the last words Joshua's story ended, and Billy slowly closed his book. When dinner was over he settled himself by his aunt before the fire, and told of what he had read.

"And so," Aunt Maria continued, as the boy stopped speaking, "Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, kept the Children of Israel true to their God all his days. He was a great leader, and they must have missed his wise counsel greatly; for he died soon after they gave the promise of which you have just told me, being one hundred and ten years old. They buried him at Mount Ephraim.

"I will tell you of some of their troubles which came upon them after his death, and about two famous men who helped them. Their names were Gideon and Samson. But perhaps you would like to read their stories aloud to me from Uncle Ben's book."

For reply, the story-hungry boy found the place at once and began reading.



EVERY MAN BLEW HIS TRUMPET, BROKE HIS PITCHER, AND FLASHED HIS BLAZING TORCH IN THE DARKNESS

XI

GIDEON JUDGES ISRAEL

AFTER Joshua died the Children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them up to be plundered by the robber bands of Midian for seven years.

When the people were ready to reap their fields, their enemies rode out of the desert, destroyed their crops, carried off their sheep and cattle, and spread terror on every side.

At last the people became so poor that they cried out to the Lord, as they always did when in trouble, and he sent them Gideon, one of the greatest of their judges.

Gideon and His Three Hundred

About this time the robber bands of Midian and the Arabs of the desert assembled a great army, and pitched their tents in the valley of Jez-re-el.

In this crisis, the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he sounded the war trumpet, and sent messengers to gather the men of the tribes of that district.

Over thirty thousand men gathered at the call and encamped on the hillside beside the spring of Harod, or Trembling. To the north, across the valley, lay the army of their enemies.

"The men with you are too many," the Lord said to Gideon. "They will boast that their own hand has saved them. Now therefore say to them, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him leave the camp.'"

Upon that, twenty-two thousand left, but there still remained ten thousand.

"The men are yet too many," the Lord again told Gideon. "Bring them down to the water, and I will tell you who shall go with you, and who shall not go."

So Gideon brought the men down to the water to drink.

"Everyone who drinks quickly, lifting the water in his hand to his mouth, set by himself," the Lord told Gideon; "and everyone who falls down upon his knees and drinks slowly, set by himself."

The number who drank quickly, lifting the water to their mouths, was three hundred men; but all the rest fell upon their knees and drank slowly.

"By the three hundred men who drank quickly, I will save you, and deliver your enemies into your hand," the Lord said.

So Gideon kept the three hundred men by him, and sent the others to their tents.

The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

Quickly dividing his men into three companies, Gideon put into the hands of each a war trumpet, an earthen pitcher, and a torch to be hidden within the pitcher.

"Watch me," he said, "and do likewise. When I come to the enemy's camp, as you see me do, so shall you do. When I blow

the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then you blow your trumpets on every side of the camp, and shout, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'"

So the three companies set out by different paths and took their stations in the darkness on all sides of the enemy camp.

Soon after midnight, as all their foes lay sleeping in their tents, at the signal, every man blew his trumpet, broke his pitcher, flashed his blazing torch in the darkness, and shouted the war cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

Aroused from their sleep, the Midianites rushed out of their tents, thinking all Gideon's army was upon them. Shouting in the darkness, every man turned his sword against his fellow, mistaking friend for foe.

But the three hundred stood in their places, blowing their three hundred trumpets, and shouting their war cry, until their enemies became panic-stricken and fled.

Then Gideon and his men took up the pursuit, joined by their comrades who had been held in reserve in their tents.

In the confusion the vast host thought only of escape, and made for the river Jordan.

But Gideon had sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, telling the men to hasten down and cut off the fugitives at the fords of the Jordan.

So, very few escaped to the desert; and those who did, never troubled Israel again.

After this great victory, the men of Israel invited Gideon to be their king.

"Rule over us, both you and your son, and your son's son," they said; "for you have saved us from the hand of Midian."

"I will not rule over you," Gideon replied; "neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."

And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.



SAMSON'S CRUEL CAPTORS PUT OUT BOTH HIS EYES, AND MADE HIM GRIND CORN IN THE PRISON HOUSE

XII

SAMSON, THE STRONG MAN

His Feats of Strength

AFTER a time the Children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Phi-lis-tines, a heathen people living on the shores of the Great Sea, which is the Mediterranean.

Dan and Judah, the two tribes nearest the Philistines, had become so weak that they had no strength to resist their oppressors, and even refused to help Samson fight against them. So Samson fought them single-handed.

Before his birth, an angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mother and told her that her son was to be a Nazarite.

This meant that he must drink no wine or strong drink, must not eat anything unclean, and must never have his hair cut off.

"The child shall be a Nazarite," the angel told her, "and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samson grew up to be the strongest man mentioned in the Bible. As a youth, the spirit of the Lord began to move him to

use his strength to resist the Philistines who had enslaved his people. So strong was he that even wild animals were helpless before him.

One day as he was going down into the Philistine country, a young lion came out of a vineyard and roared at him. Samson seized the lion by the jaws and tore him, as he might tear a kid, and killed him with his bare hands.

He never lost an occasion to quarrel with the hated Philistines. In a dispute with some of their young men, he killed thirty of them at one time. Samson had no soldiers to follow him, as Gideon had had, so he fought alone.

On another occasion Samson caught three hundred foxes, tied firebrands to their tails, and set them loose in the standing corn of the Philistines, and burned up both the cornfields and vineyards; which was nothing compared to what the Philistines had done to his people.

In revenge, the Philistines came up and burned Samson's wife and her father with fire. Samson smote them with a great slaughter, and then fled for safety to the top of the rock of E-tam.

The Philistines came up again and pitched their tents in Judah, and spread themselves in Le-hi.

"Why are you come up against us?" the men of Judah asked them tamely.

"We have come up to capture Samson, and to do to him as he has done to us," the Philistines replied.

Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock of Etam, not to fight their enemies, but to find Samson.

"Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us?" they asked him. "What have you done to us?"

"As they did to me, so I have done to them," Samson replied.

"We are come to bind you, and deliver you over to the Philistines," they said.

"If I let you bind me, swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves," Samson replied.



SAMSON SEIZED THE LION BY THE JAWS
(147)

148 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

So they swore not to kill the man who was fighting to set them free, and bound him with two new cords, and led him to the Philistines.

When the Philistines saw their prisoner they shouted against him.

But the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson, and the cords on his arms were like flax burnt with fire, and his bands snapped loose from his hands. He was free.

Before the Philistines could recover from their surprise he snatched up the only weapon in sight, the jawbone of an ass, which lay on the ground at his feet, and attacked them. As fast as they came he killed them, until he had slain a thousand men and put the rest to flight.

What were the men of Judah doing the while? As far as the story goes, they did not raise a finger to help. So Samson fought the whole Philistine army single-handed.

Then he threw his strange weapon at their feet, and said, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, I have slain a thousand men."

One night, not long after, the Philistines heard that Samson was in Gaza, their chief city. Quickly locking the gates, they lay in wait for him.

"In the morning," they said, "we will kill him."

When Samson found the gates locked, he lifted them off their hinges, pulled up the huge gate posts, and carried them away, gates and all, on his shoulders to the top of a hill near Hebron.

He Loses His Strength

Then Samson did a wrong thing; he paid court to a Philistine woman named Delilah, who betrayed him for money.

"Find out where his great strength lies, so that we may catch him alive and punish him," the lords of the Philistines said to her; "and each one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

So Delilah agreed to sell her lover.

"Tell me," she coaxed, "where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound?"

"Bind me with seven new bowstrings, and I shall be weak as another man," Samson replied carelessly as he went away.

So the plotters brought her the bowstrings secretly and lay in wait. When Samson came again, Delilah bound him with the bowstrings, and cried, "The Philistines are after you, Samson!"

Samson laughed and snapped his fetters as if they had been threads.

"You have told me lies," Delilah said; "now tell me how you might be bound."

"Bind me fast with new ropes that have never been used, and I shall be weak as another man," replied Samson as he went away.

When he came again Delilah had the new ropes ready, and the plotters were lying in wait to take him. So she took the new ropes and bound him as before, and cried, "Samson, the Philistines are after you!"

Samson laughed again and broke the ropes from his arms as if they had been pieces of string.

"You have mocked me," she said; "now tell me truly."

"Weave the seven locks of my hair with the web of your loom," Samson told her, "and I shall be weak as another man."

While she was weaving his long hair in the loom, Samson fell asleep.

When she had made him fast, she cried, "Wake up, Samson, the Philistines are after you!"

Samson rose up and walked off, with the web and the wooden pin that held the web hanging to his hair.

"You have mocked me three times," she said when he came again. "Now tell me where your strength lies." Every time he came she coaxed and pleaded, giving him no peace; and at last he foolishly told her his secret.

"I have been a Nazarite with God from my birth," he told

150 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

her. "If my long hair is cut off, my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, like any other man."

When Delilah saw that he had told her his secret, she sent for the lords of the Philistines again.

"Come up this once," was her message, "for he has told me all his heart."

So the plotters came again and brought the money in their hands.

When Samson came again, his enemies were lying in wait, and the trap was set.

Delilah soon coaxed him to go to sleep with his head upon her knees. When he was asleep, one of the Philistines slipped in and cut off the seven locks of his hair, and his strength left him.

"The Philistines are after you, Samson!" cried his betrayer.

Samson woke up and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself."

He did not know that the Lord had departed from him. But the Philistines captured and bound him as easily as another man.

He Regains His Strength and Dies

His cruel captors put out both his eyes, and took him down to Gaza, where they put fetters of brass on him, and made him grind corn in the prison house.

Then the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to their god Da-gon.

"Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hand," they said, rejoicing.

When the people saw their enemy, blind and in chains, they praised their god.

"Our god," they said, "has delivered into our hands our enemy, the destroyer of our country, who has killed so many of us."

Now the great temple of Dagon was full of men and women, feasting and making merry; upon the roof alone there were about three thousand.

"Call Samson from the prison house that he may make sport for us," they cried.

So they brought Samson and set him between the two great pillars of the temple, where they made sport of their blind captive until they were weary.

Samson's enemies had overlooked one thing. They forgot, or did not know, that his hair had begun to grow again and his great strength to return.

But the blind giant knew it, so he said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Lead me to the two great pillars on which the roof rests, that I may lean upon them."

Then Samson called on the Lord for the last time

"O Lord God," he prayed, "remember me, and strengthen me only this once, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."

He took hold of the two pillars upon which the temple stood, and on which the roof rested, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left.

"Let me die with the Philistines!" he cried.

Then he bowed himself with all his might; the pillars gave way; the roof fell with a crash upon the lords and upon all the people that were there. Thus it came about that the dead that he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

So this simple-minded giant fought the enemies of his country single-handed, in the days when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

* * * * *

"Wasn't he foolish, Auntie—a man so strong, to let anyone learn his secret!" Mary Frances exclaimed. But the boy sat silent, with a grave expression on his face.

"Yes, children, Samson was very foolish, and I can see that you both feel very sorry for him; but our next story will not make you sad. It is the beautiful story of Ruth. You may read the Book of Ruth, and tell me about it afterwards."



"WHO IS THIS YOUNG WOMAN?" HE ASKED THE CHIEF REAPER

XIII

THE STORY OF RUTH

MARY FRANCES opened her Bible at the story of Ruth, and began to read. "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem. . . the name of the man was E-lim-e-lech, and the name of his wife Naomi."

Then her mind began to wander, and she thought, "How I wish someone would tell me the story." She paused, opened Uncle Ben's book and glanced in.

"Yes, here it is, Billy," she cried happily, "and Naomi tells the story herself."

Then she read on, without stopping, to the end.

* * * * *

Naomi and Her Family Leave Home

I shall never forget that famine. There we were, living on our little piece of land in Bethlehem, my husband and I, with two big, hungry boys—and nothing to eat.

No rain fell; our wells ran dry; our crops would not grow; every living thing was parched by the heat, as if dried in an oven. How we suffered!

We had money to buy bread; but there was no bread to be bought.

“Naomi,” E-lim-e-lech, my husband, said to me one day, “why should we die of hunger? Let us go to the country of Moab until the famine is over.”

There seemed to be no other way; so, gathering what wealth we could carry, we set out. Our two sons, Mah-lon and Chil-i-on, were delighted at the thought of adventure, as boys would be.

After a long and weary journey around the Dead Sea and across the river Jordan, we reached the fertile plains of Moab. Here we were again a happy family, for we had plenty to eat, and the boys soon grew to be fine young men.

But our happiness was not to last long. One day, my dear husband fell sick, and almost before we knew what had happened, he died; and there we buried him.

Alas! My two fatherless boys and I, a widow, were left alone in a foreign land, far from home and kindred.

The people of Moab were very kind, but still they were strangers and did not understand. How I wept in secret! I thought the sky would never be bright again.

Well, after a time, the days of mourning were over, and then my boys began courting the girls of that country. Almost before I knew what was going on they were married; Mahlon to Ruth, and Chilion to Or-pah.

Once more we were happy; and again, almost before we knew it, ten years had slipped by. Then, one day my boys followed their father—both fell sick and died. My cup of grief was full. Husband gone, sons gone, I was alone in a strange land. If it had not been for my two daughters-in-law, I should have died, as indeed I prayed to die. We wept until we could weep no more.

One day a traveler came that way and brought the good news

that the Lord had visited his people, and that there was bread in the land of Judah.

"I will return to Bethlehem," I said.

So I set out and my two daughters-in-law went with me. After we had gone a long way, I thought how poor we were, and that perhaps they were making a mistake, and I told them so.

"Go, return each of you to her mother's house," I said. "The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have done with my sons, and with me."

Then they put their arms about me and wept.

"No; but we will go with you to your people," they both cried.

But I replied, "Turn again, my daughters; why will you go with me? I have no more sons to give you; neither do I know who will provide for you."

They both wept again, and Orpah kissed me, bade me farewell, and said that she would do as I wished and return home. But Ruth clung to me, and would not go.

"See, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods," I urged. "Go with her."

But Ruth still clung to me, and said:

"Entreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God:
Where thou diest, I will die,
And there will I be buried:
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me."

Naomi Returns with Ruth

When I heard these brave words, I saw that Ruth would not leave me. I could say no more; and from that day I loved her

as my own daughter. So, after many weary miles we two reached Bethlehem together.

The little city was stirred at our coming, and the women gathered about us and said to me, "Is this Naomi?"

"Do not call me Naomi, call me Ma-ra," I replied; "for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away rich, but the Lord has brought me home again empty."

Naomi means "pleasant," you know; and Mara, "bitter." Indeed, I was bitter at that time, for I had lost everything except the piece of land my husband left me. But I was wrong; I still had Ruth. I also had a friend named Bo-az, a relative of my husband's, and a great man in Bethlehem.

The barley harvest was just beginning when we returned, and Ruth, who was never idle, wanted to do something.

"Let me go into the fields," she said to me; "and perhaps I shall find some one who will allow me to glean among the sheaves."

"Go, my daughter," I replied.

Now, by good fortune, she happened upon a field that belonged to Boaz.

"Who is this young woman?" he asked the chief reaper, when he saw her gleaning.

"She is the young widow who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab," he replied.

Boaz spoke kindly to Ruth, and bade her welcome. "Listen, my daughter," he said, "glean here in the fields among my maidens, and when you are thirsty go and drink from our water jars."

"Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should notice me, seeing I am a stranger?" she asked, bowing to the ground.

"All your kindness to your mother-in-law has been fully told me," Boaz answered.

"Let me find favor in your sight, my lord," she replied; "for you have comforted me by speaking kindly to me."

At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come and eat with us."

When she had gone back to her gleaning, he directed the reapers to let her glean among the sheaves, and to drop some handfuls on purpose for her. So she gleaned until evening, and beat out what she had; and it was more than a bushel of barley, which she brought home to me.

"Where have you gleaned to-day, my daughter," I asked.

Ruth told me all that had happened. "The man's name with whom I gleaned is Boaz," she said.

"Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not left off his kindness to the living and the dead! He is a very near relative of ours," I told her.

So Ruth gleaned day after day in the fields of Boaz until the end of the barley harvest, and after that to the end of the wheat harvest; and all she gleaned she brought home for our living.

While Ruth was away I often wondered what would happen to her if I should die. Then I remembered the kindness of Boaz. He was of near kin, and perhaps he would protect her. It was the custom of the country for the nearest of kin to care for the woman who had been left a widow. Would he do it? I determined to find out.

Naomi Seeks a Husband for Ruth

Now after the harvest, came the threshing, and then the winnowing. The winnowing was often done on the open threshing floor in the evening, when there was a breeze to blow the chaff away. After the work was done, the men ate and lay down to sleep on the floor.

I explained my plan to Ruth.

"Boaz winnows his barley this evening," I said. "Go down to the threshing floor, and note where he lies down to sleep after his work is done. Then lie down at his feet. By this he will know that you claim the right of his protection as a near kinsman. He will understand and will tell you what to do."

Ruth was somewhat puzzled at this, but she trusted me, and said, "All that you say, I will do."

She went to the threshing floor and waited until Boaz, tired out with his work, lay down at the end of a great heap of grain, pulled his cloak over him, and went to sleep. Ruth came softly and uncovered his feet as I had told her to do, and lay down, trembling with fear.

In the night Boaz awoke, startled and afraid. Sitting up, he saw Ruth lying at his feet.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Ruth, your handmaid. I have come to claim your protection as a near kinsman," she answered, and Boaz understood.

"Blessed are you of the Lord, my daughter," he replied. "Do not fear; I will do all that you require. It is true I am your near kinsman, but there is one nearer than I. If he will do his part, well; if he will not, then I will do it, as the Lord lives. Lie down until morning."

In the morning she rose at dawn. Boaz awoke and said, "Tell no one your errand. Hold your apron; you must not return empty to Naomi."

Then he filled her apron with as much barley as she could carry, and she came home.

"How have you fared, my daughter?" I asked as she came in.

Then she told me all that Boaz had said.

"Sit still, my daughter, until we know how the matter turns out. Boaz will not rest until he finishes the thing this day."

My words came true; for Boaz went to the gate of the city where the court was held and sat down to wait. Soon the near kinsman came by, and Boaz said, "Ho, such a one! Turn aside and sit down here."

So he turned aside and sat down. Then Boaz took ten men, elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here."

And they sat down.

Then he said to the near kinsman: "Naomi sells the piece of land which was our brother Elimelech's. If you wish, you have the first right to redeem it. If you will not redeem it, tell me

158 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN LAND OF PROMISE

that I may know, for I have the second right to redeem it. The day you buy it of Naomi, you must also marry Ruth according to our custom."

"I cannot redeem it; take my right and buy it for yourself," the near kinsman replied.

Boaz said to the elders and all the people: "You are witnesses that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Mahlon's and Chilion's of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth, her daughter-in-law, the widow of Mahlon, will become my wife, to keep alive the inheritance."

The elders and the people said: "We are witnesses."

So Boaz married Ruth and we were very happy, now that Ruth was provided for.

In due time Ruth had a son. I took my grandchild to my bosom and nursed it, and we called his name Obed.

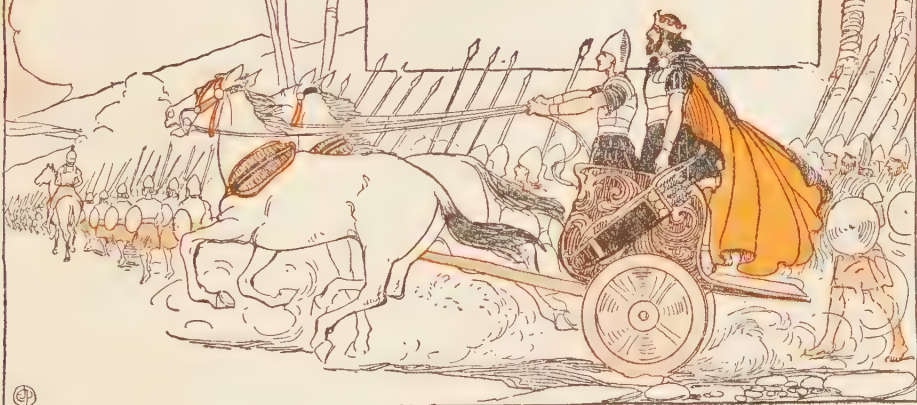
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Mary Frances looked up from her reading, puzzled; had she been dreaming, or had she heard Naomi's voice—the words seemed so real. Of one thing she was quite sure; she had made two more Bible friends.

"Yes, my dear," said Aunt Maria that evening, when Mary Frances had ended her story, "Ruth and Naomi will be your friends for life."

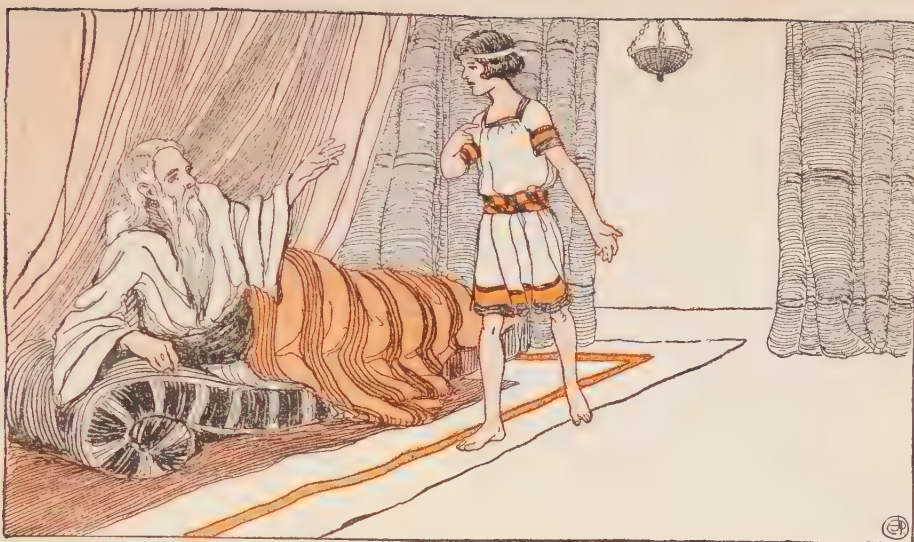
Then, after a moment's silence, she continued, "I had planned to tell you the next stories, but since you have told about Ruth so well, I know you will enjoy reading them together. Billy will like them. They tell of the days of the kings, of Samuel, and David, and Saul."

THE CHOSEN
PEOPLE IN
THE DAYS OF
THE KINGS:



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF THE KINGS

“And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice,
and make them a king.”—I SAMUEL 8 : 22.



"I DID NOT CALL YOU, MY SON; LIE DOWN AGAIN," ELI REPLIED

XIV

SAMUEL AND SAUL

AS you may have guessed, when the children opened Uncle Ben's book they found Samuel himself telling how his mother, Hannah, presented him to the Lord when a very small child.

"Oh, what a lovely story!" Mary Frances exclaimed, as Billy went on reading.

* * * * *

The Child Samuel

My mother, Hannah, was a very wonderful woman. One day when I was still a child she carried me from her home in Ramah up to the tabernacle at Shiloh, where the ark was kept.

"Here is my son, Samuel," she said to Eli the priest, who was even then an old man. "I have promised him to the Lord, and as long as he lives he shall serve the Lord."

162 CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF KINGS

Now Eli knew of her vow; so he received me kindly, and agreed to train me in the tabernacle service.

So my mother returned home, leaving me at Shiloh to be taught by Eli.

At first I was lonely and a little afraid, but my teacher was very kind. I soon learned to delight in my duties, which were to light the lamps, open the doors of the tabernacle, and wait on my master, whose eyes were growing dim.

My mother and father came up to the yearly sacrifice; and every year my mother brought me a little coat which she had made with her own hands, and of which I was very proud.

I should have been very happy, but for one thing. Eli was sad, always sad. And he had good reason. Even in Shiloh the people worshiped heathen gods. Worst of all, the two greatest offenders were Eli's two sons, and nothing their father could say would change them.

Very rarely in those evil days did the Lord appear by word or vision to his people; so it is no wonder I did not understand when he spoke to me the first time.

One night when all was still, Eli lay down to sleep in his place, and I lay down in mine. The lamp of God in the part of the tabernacle where the ark stood, was burning low.

As I lay half asleep and half awake, I heard a voice.

"Samuel," the voice said.

"Here am I," I answered.

Running to Eli, I asked, "Did you call me?"

"I did not call you; lie down again," he answered.

So I went back and lay down.

"Samuel," the voice called again.

Again I arose and went to Eli.

"Here am I," I said; "for you did call me."

"I did not call, my son; lie down again," Eli replied.

Now, I did not yet know the Lord, nor had his word yet come to me, even when he called the third time.

So I arose again and went to Eli.

"Here am I," I said; "for you did call me."

Then Eli perceived that it was the Lord.

"Go, lie down," he said; "if the voice calls again you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

So I went and lay down in my place, not knowing what to think.

Then the Lord came and stood, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening," I said, wondering.

"See, I will do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli and his house all that I have spoken from the beginning to the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever, because his sons speak evil of God, and he restrained them not."

I lay awake all night, fearing to show Eli the vision.

When I was opening the doors of the house of God in the morning, Eli called me.

"Samuel, my son," he asked, "what is the thing that the Lord has spoken to you?"

I hesitated. "Do not hide it from me," he urged. "God do so to you and more also, if you keep anything from me of all that he spoke."

So I told him all, and kept nothing from him.

"It is the Lord," he said sadly; "let him do what seems good to him."

The People Demand a King

For many years I judged Israel, going from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gil-gal, and Miz-pah. My home was in Ra-mah, where I had been born. There I built an altar to the Lord.

One day all the elders of Israel assembled themselves at my house in Ramah.

164 CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF KINGS

"See, you are growing old," they said, "and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like other nations."

But the thing displeased me, and I prayed to the Lord.

"Listen to the voice of the people," the Lord said to me; "for they have not rejected you; they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them. Yet show them the manner of the king who shall reign over them."

So I told all the words of the Lord to the people.

"A king," I said, "will oppress you with his chariots, his horsemen, and his armies; he will lay taxes upon you, and take a tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and of your sheep, and give them to his officers and servants. And you will cry out in that day against your king, but the Lord will not hear you."

But the people refused to listen to my words.

"We will have a king over us," they cried, "that we also may be like other nations; that our king may judge us, and go out before us to fight our battles."

"Listen to their voice, and make them a king," the Lord said.

There was a man of the tribe of Ben-ja-min, whose name was Kish, a mighty man of valor. Now Kish had a son, Saul, a fine young man, and a goodly, and there was not in Israel a handsomer man than he. In height, he stood head and shoulders above other men. This man the Lord told me to anoint to be king over his people, and I did so.

Then I called the people together at Mizpah and addressed them:

"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt and freed you from the kingdoms that oppressed you; but you have this day rejected your God, and said to him, set a king over us. Now therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes.' "

So I brought the tribes of Israel before me; but when they sought Saul, the son of Kish, he could nowhere be found.

At last the searchers discovered him hiding behind the tents, and brought him before me. As he stood among the people, he was head and shoulders above them all.

"See the man whom the Lord has chosen; there is none like him among all the people," I cried.

And all the people shouted, "God save the king!"

Then I told the people the manner of the kingdom, and afterwards wrote it in a book.

Saul's Great Sin

Now, when Saul became king he agreed to obey God in everything, and this he did not do.

One day I went to Saul with a command from the Lord:

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts: 'I remember what Am-a-lek did to Israel, how he lay in wait for my people when they came up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and his people, and destroy them utterly.'"

But Saul did only part of what God had commanded him; for he spared Agag the king, and some of the cattle.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "I am sorry I set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments."

When I heard this it grieved me so that I cried to the Lord all night. Rising up early in the morning, I went down to Gilgal to see Saul about it.

"Yes," Saul said, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way he sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, but have utterly destroyed his people. But my people took the spoil, sheep and oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God in Gilgal."

"Has the Lord as great delight in sacrifices as in obedience to his voice?" I asked. "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord he has also rejected you from being king."

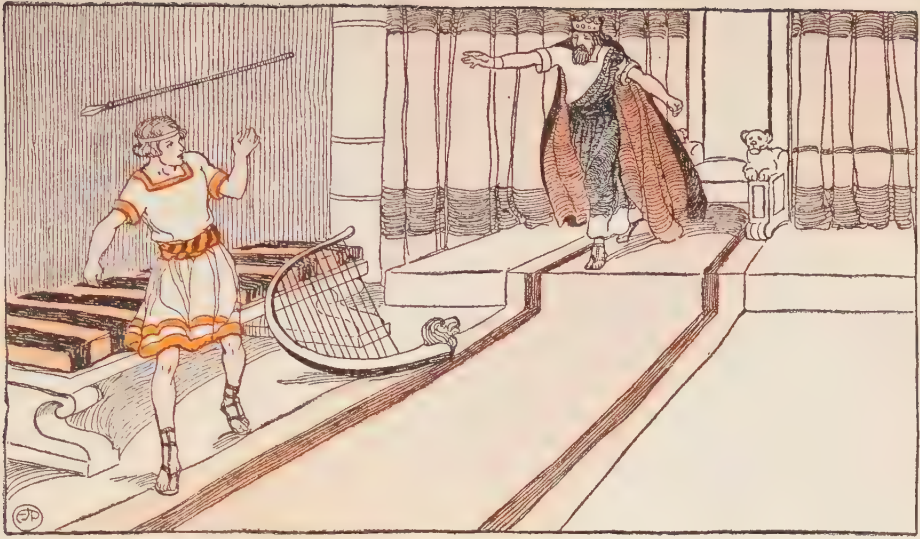
"I have sinned," he confessed; "for I have broken the com-

mandment of the Lord. Now, I pray you, pardon my sin; come with me, that I may worship the Lord."

"I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king."

As I turned about to go away, he laid hold of the skirt of my robe, and it tore in his hand. "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day," I said; "and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you."

Then I returned to Ramah, and never went to see Saul again, but I mourned for him a long time.



LEAPING UP, HE HURLED THE SPEAR FULL AT DAVID

XV

THE STORY OF DAVID

Samuel Anoints David

HOW long will you weep for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" the Lord said to me one day. "Fill your horn with oil, and go to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen a king from among his sons."

"How can I go?" I replied. "If Saul hears of it, he will kill me."

"Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I am come to make an offering.' Call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do, and you shall anoint the one I name."

So I went down from Ramah through the hill country to Bethlehem, leading the heifer. The chief men of the town, Jesse among them, came to meet me trembling, for my visit was a surprise.

"Do you come peaceably?" they asked.

"Yes, peaceably," I replied. "I am come to sacrifice. Prepare yourselves and come with me."

When they were come, I looked on E-li-ab, Jesse's oldest son.

"Surely the Lord's anointed stands before him," I thought.

"Do not look on his face or his great height," the Lord said to me. "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

I shook my head, and Jesse called his second son to pass before me. I waited, but no word came from the Lord.

"Neither has the Lord chosen this one," I said.

Then Jesse made Sham-mah, his third son, pass before me. I waited. "Neither has the Lord chosen this one," I said.

In this order Jesse made seven of his sons pass before me.

"The Lord has not chosen these," I said to Jesse. "Are all your sons here?"

"No; there is one more, David, the youngest," Jesse replied; "he is away, keeping the sheep."

"Send and fetch him," I said; "we will not sit down till he comes."

So we waited while Jesse sent and brought him in from the field.

As David stood before me, I saw that he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and very good to look upon.

"Arise, anoint him, for this is he," came the word at once.

Then I took the oil and poured it on his head, anointing him before his father and brothers, who stood there not quite knowing what to make of it.

From that day forward the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David.

After it was all over, I bade them good-by and went back to Ramah.

Saul's Evil Spirit

Because of his disobedience, the spirit of the Lord had departed from King Saul, and an evil spirit came upon him at times and terrified him.

"See, now, an evil spirit from God sometimes troubles you," his servants said to Saul after one of these attacks. "Let the king command his servants to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp; and when the evil spirit comes he shall play and the king shall be well."

"Find a man who can play like that, and bring him to me," the king replied.

"I have seen a young man, a son of Jesse of Bethlehem," one of the servants said, "who is skilful with the harp. He is also a mighty man of valor, and the Lord is with him."

Upon this, Saul sent messengers to Jesse, saying, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep."

Jesse sent his son at once with a present of food to the king. When the king saw the young shepherd standing before him, he loved him greatly.

"Let David, I pray you, stand before me, for I like him," was the message Saul sent back to Jesse.

So it came about that, when the evil spirit troubled Saul, David played sweetly upon the harp, and Saul was refreshed; and the evil spirit left him.

David and the Giant Goliath

About this time, the Philistines, who were always making war upon Israel, gathered a great army and marched into Judah. Saul and the men of Israel met the enemy at the vale of E-lah, and set the battle in array against them.

The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and the men of Israel on a mountain on the other side, and the valley lay between them.

In the morning there came out of the camp of the Philistines a champion, named Go-li-ath of Gath, who was over ten feet in height.

This giant wore a helmet of brass upon his head; he was armed with a coat of mail, the weight of which was five thousand shekels

of brass; he had greaves of brass upon his legs; the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield bearer went before him.

Thus armed, this man stood between the two armies, and challenged the army of Israel.

"Why are you come out to set your battle in array?" he cried in a loud voice that rang across the valley. "Am I not a Philistine? And you, servants of Saul? Choose a man for you, and let him come down! If he is able to fight with me, and kill me, then we will be your servants. If he is not able, and I kill him, then you shall be our servants, and serve us. I defy the army of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together!"

When Saul and all Israel heard these words, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. Morning and evening for forty days, the giant drew near and hurled his defiance at Israel, and no man dared go against him.

Now David's three eldest brothers had gone after Saul to the battle, but David, who was the youngest, had returned to Bethlehem to feed his father's sheep.

"Take this measure of parched corn, and these ten loaves and carry them quickly to your brothers in the camp; and give these ten cheeses to the captain of their company; and see how they fare," said his father to David one day.

Before daylight the next morning David was up and away. The twenty-five miles or so to the camp were as nothing to the swift-footed shepherd lad. As he ran up to the place where the wagons were standing, he heard the shouting of the men as they set their battle in array. Handing the food he had brought to a keeper of the baggage, he ran to the army and found his brothers.

As he talked with them, the giant came out of the ranks of the Philistines and hurled his challenge as before, and David heard his words, and saw how sorely frightened the men were.

He overheard one man say to another: "Do you see this Philistine who defies Israel? The king will make the man rich

who kills him, and will give him his daughter, and make his house free in Israel."

"What shall be done to the man who kills him?" David broke in, fiercely. "Who is this heathen anyway, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

As the men were answering David's questions, Eliab, his eldest brother, who had heard what David said, interrupted angrily.

"Why are you come down here?" he demanded. "With whom have you left your sheep? I know the pride and mischief of your heart; you are come down to see the battle."

"Now what have I done?" David replied. "I only asked a question."

Leaving his brother, David spoke to another and another, and received the same reply. At last a soldier repeated David's words to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

"Let no man's heart fail," David said to Saul; "your servant will go and fight this Philistine."

"You are not able to fight with him," said Saul, smiling. "You are only a youth, and he is a man of war."

"Your servant kept his father's sheep, and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and struck him, and took the lamb out of his mouth. If he attacked me, I caught him by his beard, and killed him. Your servant killed both the lion and the bear; and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he defies the armies of the living God."

Fearing the king would refuse, David went on eagerly, "The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

"Go, and the Lord shall be with you," said Saul at last, not knowing what else to do.

Saul put his own armor on David and gave him his sword, but David could not wear them. He was only of ordinary height, while Saul was the tallest man in his army.

"I cannot wear these," he said, putting them off. "I have not proved them."

Taking his shepherd's staff in his hand, he advanced toward the giant. As he came to the brook which ran through the valley, he stooped and chose five smooth stones out of the bed, and put them in the shepherd's bag which hung over his shoulder. His only weapon, his sling, was in his hand.

By this time both armies were looking on. The Philistine drew near, his shield bearer before him.

When he saw that David was but a youth, little more than half his size, ruddy, and of fair countenance, he mocked him.

"Am I a dog that you fight me with sticks? Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds and beasts!" the Philistine shouted, cursing David in the name of his gods.

"You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield," David answered boldly, "but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you, and cut off your head; and I will give the carcasses of the Philistines this day to the birds and the wild beasts, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that both armies may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

When the giant came on, spear in hand, David ran to meet him, taking a stone out of his bag as he ran. Slipping the stone into his sling, he hurled it at the giant, hitting him in the forehead at the first shot. As the stone sank in, the giant fell headlong upon his face to the earth.

So David struck down the giant with nothing but a sling and a stone. There was not even a sword in his hand. Almost before the wondering armies knew what had happened the young shepherd ran swiftly to his fallen foe. Standing over him, he quickly drew the giant's sword and cut off his head.



STANDING OVER HIM, HE QUICKLY DREW THE GIANT'S SWORD AND CUT OFF
HIS HEAD

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled pell-mell; and the men of Israel and Judah pursued them to Gath, the home of the giant, and to the gates of Ek-ron.

When Saul saw the shepherd lad who sometimes played on the harp before him, go out bravely to fight the giant, he was curious to know more about him.

"Whose son is this youth, Abner?" he asked his chief captain.

"As your soul lives, I cannot tell," Abner replied.

"Inquire whose son the stripling is," the king told him.

When David returned with the men from chasing the Philistines, Abner brought him before Saul.

"Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked him, as he stood there holding the head of the giant in his hand.

"I am the son of your servant, Jesse of Bethlehem," David answered.

Then Saul made him an officer in his army, and would not let him return home again.

Saul Attempts David's Life

Now when Saul's son, Jonathan, saw David standing before his father, he loved him as his own soul, and the two young heroes became fast friends from that day.

Jonathan even stripped off his robe, and his sword, and his bow, and his girdle and gave them to David; and the friendship then formed was broken only by death.

When the king made David an officer, the people were very much pleased, as also were all the king's servants; but the king himself began to grow jealous of David almost as soon as he had performed his great exploit.

As the soldiers were returning from the pursuit of the Philistines, the women came out singing and dancing to meet king Saul. As they played upon their timbrels, the women sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands."

"To David his ten thousands, and to me only thousands," Saul said in a rage. "What more can he have but the kingdom?"

Though Saul had to reward the hero, yet from that day on he began to hate him.

Soon after, the evil spirit came upon Saul so mightily that he began to rave in the house. David played the harp before him as he had done day by day; but instead of quieting him, the playing only made him worse. One day as the king sat there with his spear in his hand an evil thought entered his mind.

Leaping up, he hurled the spear full at David.

"I will pin him to the wall!" he said.

He would have done it, too, had not David been quicker than the spear, leaping aside just as it shot past him and stuck in the wall.

You see, Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him in all that he did; but the Lord had departed from Saul.

Now when the king was over his fit, he sent David away, and made him captain over a thousand men. As captain, David behaved himself so wisely in all his ways that all Israel and Judah loved him. But the king stood in fear of him.

One day Saul said to David, "Only be valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles, and I will give you my elder daughter Me-rab, for a wife."

"Who am I, and who are my people, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" David replied.

So Saul gave Merab to another.

Now Saul had a second daughter, Mi-chal, who loved David.

When Saul heard of it he sent the young captain upon many perilous raids against the Philistines, hoping secretly that he would be killed; but David succeeded so well that his fame spread more and more.

Then Saul gave him Michal, his daughter, as his wife; but he was yet the more afraid of him because he saw the Lord was with him. So Saul was David's enemy continually.

One day, Saul spoke to Jonathan about killing David; but Jonathan loved David as his best friend and would not listen. Instead, he warned David of his danger.

"My father is seeking to kill you," he told David; "therefore, go and hide in a secret place until you hear from me."

Then Jonathan went to his father and pleaded for his friend.

"Let not the king sin against his servant, David," he said; "he has not sinned against you, but has served you well, for he took his life in his hand and slew the giant, and the Lord gave Israel a great victory; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, and kill David without a cause?"

So Saul listened to his son, and swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death."

Then Jonathan brought David to the king, and he stood in his presence as before.

But after a time, the evil spirit came upon Saul again as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, and David played upon his harp to quiet him. Leaping up in a frenzy of rage, Saul hurled his spear at David again, and the spear struck the wall, as David slipped away out of the king's presence.

The maddened king at once sent men to watch David's house and to kill him when he came out in the morning.

"If you do not save your life to-night," Michal, his wife, told him, "you will be killed to-morrow."

So Michal packed David's shepherd's bag with food, and let him down through the window by a rope, and he escaped that night.

As soon as he was safely away, Michal put an image in David's bed with a pillow under its head, and covered it over.

In the morning, when David did not come out, Saul ordered his men to enter and capture him.

"He is sick," Michal told them, to gain time.

When Saul heard that, he was angrier still.

"Bring him to me in his bed, that I may kill him," he cried.

When the men returned to David's house, they saw the image in the bed with its head on a pillow, and reported to the king, who sent for Michal in haste.

"Why have you deceived me thus, and let my enemy escape?" demanded the king angrily.

"He said to me, 'Let me go; why should I kill you?'" Michal answered, afraid of her father's anger.

Now when David escaped Saul's fury he fled to my house at Ramah, and told me all that Saul had done to him.

When Saul heard where David was, he sent officers to arrest him, but as soon as they arrived, the spirit of God came upon them, and turned them aside from their errand.

Although Saul had been defeated this time, I knew that he was determined to kill David. So I bade him good-by, weeping as he left me, for I loved him like a son, and I never saw him again.

* * * * *

As the part of the story told by Samuel ended, Billy paused. "Oh, dear, I hope it's not going to stop! I wonder if Saul did kill David!" cried his sister.

Then her brother turned over the leaf and read what came next.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried. "Uncle Ben lets David continue his own story."

As the boy read on it seemed as if David himself was speaking. They knew him at once—yes, it was David himself, who was telling the story.

The Friendship of David and Jonathan

When Saul and his men pursued me to Ramah, I left Samuel and went straight back to Jonathan.

"What have I done?" I asked him. "What is my sin? Why does your father seek my life?"

"God forbid! It is not so! You shall not die!" he replied. "My father hides nothing from me, and he will tell me his purpose."

"Your father knows well that you are my friend, and he will hide it from you. As the Lord lives, there is but a step between me and death."

"Whatever you desire, I will do for you," he answered.

"See," I replied; "to-morrow is the new moon, and it is my duty to sit at the king's table; but let me go and I will hide myself in the field until the third day. If your father asks for me, tell him you gave me leave to go to Bethlehem. If he says it is well, then we shall know he means no harm to me, but if he is very angry, then you may be sure he means evil toward me. But if I have done wrong, do not trouble to bring me to your father; kill me yourself."

"Far be it from me," Jonathan said. "If my father meant to kill you, would I not tell you? Come, let us go into the field."

When we were in the field, Jonathan said, "The Lord, the God of Israel, be my witness; I will find out within three days my father's purpose. If he intends evil, I will send you away in peace."

Then he made me swear that I would show kindness to him and his house forever; and we made a covenant which was never broken, for we loved each other.

"Go, hide for three days," Jonathan said, "and then come quickly and conceal yourself by the great stone in the field where you first hid. On the third day, I will come into the field and shoot three arrows, as though shooting at a mark. I will send a lad to pick up the arrows, and if you hear me say, 'The arrows are on this side of you,' come from your hiding place, for you are safe, as the Lord lives; but if I say, 'The arrows are beyond you,' then you are not safe, for the Lord has sent you away."

Then I went to my hiding place, and Jonathan returned home.

The next day, as Jonathan told me afterwards, the king sat at his table as at other times, upon his seat by the wall, and Abner

sat by his side; Jonathan stood up; my seat was empty; but Saul said nothing that day.

The second day after the new moon, my place was empty again.

"Why does not the son of Jesse come to my table, either yesterday or to-day?" the king asked Jonathan.

When Jonathan began to make my excuses, Saul's anger burst upon his son.

"Son of a rebel," he cried, "do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own and your mother's shame? Do you not know that as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the ground, you will never be king? Now send and fetch him, for he shall surely die."

"Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan demanded. At these words Saul hurled his spear at his son, just as he had hurled it at me.

Then, for the first time, Jonathan knew surely that his father had determined to put me to death.

So Jonathan left the table in fierce anger, his food untouched, because of the shame his father had put upon his friend.

In the morning I saw him enter the field with a lad.

From my hiding place I watched Jonathan shoot an arrow toward the great stone, and then as I strained my ears I heard the dreaded words, "Is not the arrow beyond you?"

As the lad ran, I heard the cry, "Make speed, haste, stay not!"

The lad, knowing nothing of what was going on, picked up the arrow and took it to his master, who gave him his weapons, and said, "Go, carry them home."

As soon as the lad was gone I came out of my hiding place, and fell on my face, and bowed three times. Then Jonathan and I kissed each other, and wept bitterly.

Jonathan told me all that had happened and bade me good-by.

"Go in peace," he said, "since we have sworn, both of us, in

the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between you and me, and between your children and my children for ever.'"

Then he returned to the city; and I, a fugitive, to my hiding place.

David Gets the Giant's Sword

When night came, I fled to Nob, the city of the priests; and in the morning A-him-e-lech, the priest, came to meet me, trembling.

"Why are you alone, and no men with you?" he asked.

Making an excuse that I was on the king's business, and the young men were at such a place, I said, "Give me five loaves of bread, or what you have at hand;" for I was very hungry.

"There is no common bread at hand, but there is the holy bread," he replied; and gave me five loaves.

Now Do-eg, the chief herdsman of Saul, happened to be there, and saw what was done.

After the priest had given me the bread, I said, "Is there not here at hand a sword or a spear? I have no weapon with me, because the king's business requires haste."

"The sword of Goliath, the Philistine whom you slew, hangs wrapped in a cloth behind the sacred vestments. If you will take that, take it, for there is none other here."

"There is none like that; give it me!" I said.

Gladly I took the sword, and, knowing that Doeg would tell Saul that he had seen me, I fled that same day, and went down to A-chish, the Philistine king of Gath. There I met a new danger.

"Is not this David, the king of the land?" the servants of Achish asked when they saw me. "Did they not sing, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'"

When I heard this, I was sore afraid that the Philistine king would take me prisoner, so I pretended madness, and scratched on the doors of the gate, and foamed at the mouth.

"Lo, you see this fellow is mad," Achish said when they

brought me into his presence. "Have I need of madmen, that you should bring him to me?"

Then I escaped, and went to the great cave of A-dul-lam, which is in the cliffs of the hill country of Judah.

When my brothers heard where I was, they came down to me, and all who were in distress, in debt, or in bitterness of soul, gathered there; and in no long time I was captain of a band of four hundred men.

News of this came to Saul and his men, and then Doeg told the king how the priest, Ahimelech, had helped me. In a rage Saul sent for the priest and commanded Doeg to slay him.

Many of the men who were with me were mighty men of war. One day when we were suffering from thirst I thought of the well at which I had often drunk as a shepherd lad.

"Oh, that some one would give me a drink of water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem!" I cried.

Now the Philistines were in Bethlehem at the time, but unknown to me, three of my men fought their way through to the well, drew a jar of water from it, and fought their way back.

When they brought the water to me I poured it on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

"Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this," I cried. "Is not this the blood of men who risked their lives?" And I would not drink it.

David Spares Saul's Life

Day after day while we were in the strongholds of the hill country, Saul and his men hunted me, but God delivered me from their hands.

One time Jonathan came to me while I was concealed in a wood, and encouraged me.

"Do not fear," he said, "my father will not find you; you will be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you; and that also Saul my father knows."

Again we renewed our league of friendship, and Jonathan slipped away unseen.

Sometimes we had very narrow escapes. One day we were on one side of a mountain, and Saul and his men were on the other side, and had almost surrounded us, when a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Make haste, and come, the Philistines are raiding the land."

So we escaped, and fled to the strongholds of En-ge-di, near the Dead Sea.

When Saul had scattered the Philistines, he marched down with three thousand men to hunt me and my men among the rocks of the wild goats.

One day while I was hiding with some of my men in the deepest part of a great cave, Saul came in to rest.

"See," my men whispered, "the Lord has delivered your enemy into your hand."

Without making a sound, I crept along the floor of the cave to the place where Saul lay, and cut off the skirt of his robe; then I crept back.

So angry were my men that they would have rushed forward and killed Saul, had I not checked them.

"The Lord forbid that I should lift my hand against the king, who is the Lord's anointed," I said.

After a while Saul rose up and left the cave, knowing nothing of the danger he had been in, and I followed at a little distance.

"My lord the king!" I cried.

When Saul looked around I bowed my face to the ground.

"Why do you listen to men who say that David seeks your hurt?" I said. "See, this day you were in my power in the cave, and some bade me kill you, but I spared your life. Moreover, my father, see the skirt of your robe in my hand, which I cut off, and did not kill you."

When Saul had gotten over his surprise, he cried, "Is this your voice, my son David?"

Then he lifted up his voice and wept.

"You are more righteous than I," he cried, "for you have returned me good for evil. You have spared my life when you might have killed me. May the Lord reward you for what you have done this day. Now I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be yours. Swear therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my children after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house."

So I swore to Saul, and Saul went home; but I and my men returned to our strongholds.

David Spares Saul's Life a Second Time

About this time Samuel the prophet died, and all Israel gathered in Ramah, and buried him with great mourning. I, too, grieved in my hiding place for my friend.

In spite of my agreement with Saul it was not long before he came with three thousand chosen men to hunt me once more.

Saul pitched his camp on a hill at the edge of the desert, but we kept to the wilderness.

He had scarcely arrived before my spies reported where his camp was, and I went to see it.

Then I said to the men who were with me, "Who will go down with me into Saul's camp?"

"I will go down with you," said Abishai.

So we two stole into Saul's camp that night. Saul, and Abner the captain of the host, lay sleeping in the place of the tents and wagons, and the men lay round about them. It was the custom to mark the king's place with a spear stuck in the ground at his head, and beside Saul there was also a jar of water.

"God has delivered your enemy into your hand this night," whispered Abishai. "Now let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not need to smite him the second time."

"Do not kill him," I said. "As the Lord lives, the Lord shall

smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall perish in battle. The Lord forbid that I should lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed; but now take, I pray you, the spear at his head and the jar of water, and let us go."

So we took the spear and the jar of water, and stole away; and no man saw it, nor knew it, nor did any awake, because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them.

Then we went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off.

"Abner! Abner!" I kept calling. "Why do you not answer, Abner?"

"Who are you that calls to the king?" Abner answered at last.

"Are you not a brave man? Who is there like you in Israel?" I called back. "Why do you not keep watch over the king? As the Lord lives, you are worthy to die, because you have not guarded the king. Now, see where the king's spear is, and the jar of water at his head," I cried, holding them up in the starlight.

By this time Saul was awake and knew my voice.

"Is that your voice, my son David?" he cried.

"It is my voice, my lord, O king," I replied. "Why does my lord pursue his servant? What have I done? Or what evil is in my hand? I pray you, let the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord has stirred you up against me, let him accept an offering; but if it be men, cursed be they before the Lord, for they have driven me out so that I should have no share in the Lord's inheritance. Now, let not my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the Lord, for the king of Israel is come out to hunt a flea, even as one hunts a partridge upon the mountains."

Then Saul said, "I have sinned; return, my son David; I will do you harm no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this night. I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

Then I held up the king's spear. "See your spear, O king!

Let one of the young men come over and fetch it. And, see, as your life was held safe in my eyes to-day, so let my life be held safe in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me from all trouble."

"Blessed are you, my son David," answered the king; "you shall do great things, and shall surely prevail."

So Saul returned to his place, and I went on my way, but I said in my heart, "I shall surely perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me to do than to escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, so shall I escape out of his hand."

When it was told Saul where I and my men had gone, he gave up hunting me; so we passed a full year and four months in that country, and had many adventures, which are told in the first Book of Samuel.

Death of Saul and Jonathan

In those days the Philistines gathered fresh armies to fight Israel, and pitched their camp in Shu-nem; while Saul gathered his forces near Mount Gil-bo-a.

One day the enemy attacked Saul's army fiercely, driving his men back upon Mount Gilboa, where many were slain.

Pressing hard upon Saul, the Philistines slew his three sons who fought by his side, the brave Jonathan among them; and the archers hit Saul, sorely wounding him.

Then Saul commanded his armor-bearer to kill him.

"Draw your sword, and thrust me through," he cried; "lest these heathen do it, and make a mock of me."

But his armor-bearer would not; he was afraid to kill his king. So Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword, and died with him.

So Saul and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and many of his men died that day together.

When the people of Israel saw that Saul's army had fled, and

that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their towns and the Philistines came and took them.

On the morrow when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off Saul's head, stripped off his armor, and sent men throughout their land to publish the news of his death among the people.

Saul's armor they put in the temple of their idol, and hung the four bodies on the walls of Beth-shan.

When the terrible news was brought to me, I tore my clothes, and mourned and wept, and fasted for Saul and Jonathan, and for the people of Israel who had fallen by the sword.

In my grief for Jonathan, I wrote a song of lament, beginning: "Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!"*

Now when the men of Ja-besh-gil-e-ad heard what the enemy had done to Saul, they remembered how Saul had saved them from the hand of the cruel Na-hash. Setting off at once, they marched all night to Bethshan, recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons, brought them back to Jabesh, and burned them there.

Then they took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

After I became king, I went to Jabesh and gathered the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and buried them in the tomb of Saul's father, Kish, in the country of Benjamin.

* * * * *

Just as David finished telling of his early adventures, the children heard a sound at the door.

"Oh, Auntie," Mary Frances cried, as the old lady entered, "what a wonderful man David was!"

"Yes, David was a great warrior and a great king; but, as I have told you, he was also a great poet; and some of his psalms, or sacred songs, are found in the Book of Psalms."

* II Samuel 1 : 17-27.

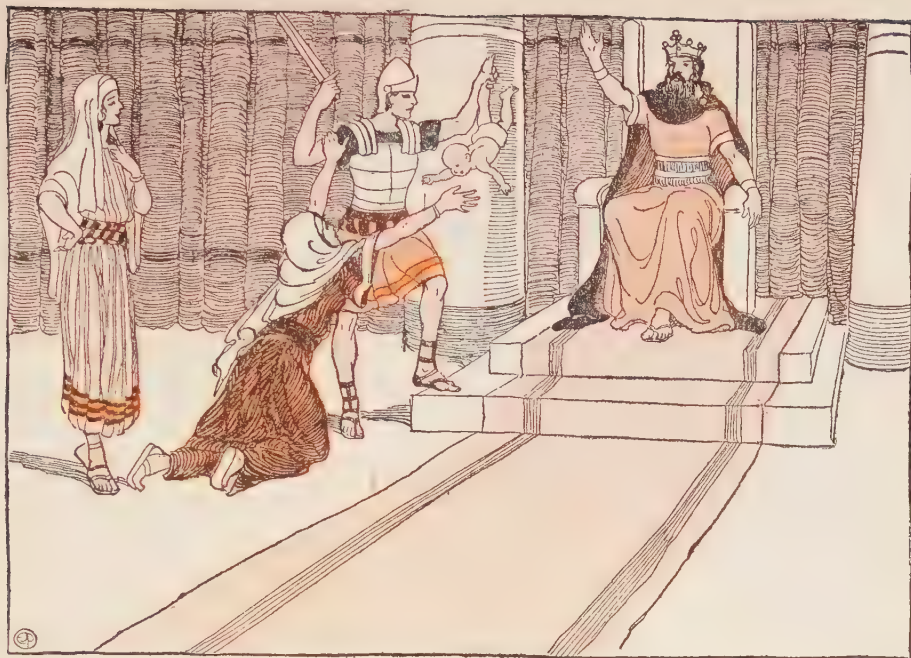
"I know one, the twenty-third!" exclaimed the little girl

"That is fine, every child should know David's Shepherd Psalm," said her aunt.

"There are several others I should like you to learn by heart some day," she went on. "I will give you their numbers—1, 15, 19, 24, 46, 121."

"Let me read them now, Aunty?"

"Certainly, my dear child. Read them aloud to me—will you, please? And when you come to the Shepherd Psalm, close the book and recite it."



"GIVE HER THE LIVING CHILD," HE SAID. "DO NOT KILL IT; SHE IS ITS MOTHER"

XVI

KING SOLOMON

Solomon's Wise Choice

"I AM going to tell you about David's son, Solomon," said Aunt Maria, the next afternoon. "Perhaps we can reach the end of the Bible before your parents come home."

"Fine," said Billy. "Aunt Maria, you can't go too fast for me."

"That's what I say," agreed his sister, settling herself comfortably as the old lady began the story.

* * * * *

When David was old, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. Assembling all his princes and valiant men at Jerusalem, he thus addressed them:

"Hear me, my brothers and my people," he said; "as for me,

I had it in my heart to build a temple for the Ark of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had prepared gold, silver, wood, marble, precious stones, and all things in abundance.

"But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for my name, because you have been a man of war, and have shed blood. Solomon, your son, shall build my house and my courts, and I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is constant to obey my commands as at this day.'"

To his son Solomon, David said, "Be strong and of good courage, and show yourself a man. Fear not, for the Lord, even my God, will be with you; he will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of Jerusalem. He reigned over Israel forty years—seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem; and died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his place.

When Solomon began to reign he was about twenty years old; the Lord was with him and magnified him greatly. Solomon also loved the Lord, walking in the steps of his father David, save that he liked to sacrifice in high places.

Soon after he became king, he gathered his princes, judges, and chief men at the high place of Gibeon. Here stood a brazen altar, on which Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings.

That night God appeared to him in a dream.

"Ask what I shall give you," God said to him.

The young king wanted so many things; which should he choose?

"O Lord my God," he replied, "you have made me king instead of David my father; and I am like a little child; I know not how to go out or to come in. Give me a heart to understand and to judge the people, that I may be wise enough to know good from evil."

The reply of the young ruler pleased the Lord greatly.

"Because you have asked this thing," God said, "and have not asked for long life or riches, nor for the life of your enemies; but have asked wisdom for yourself, see, I have done according to your word. Lo, I have given you a wise, and an understanding heart; you shall be wiser than any king who has gone before you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any like you among the kings of the earth. If you walk in my ways, and obey my commands, as your father David did, I will also give you length of days."

Then Solomon awoke, and lo, it was a dream. He went back to Jerusalem at once and stood before the Ark of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

So God gave Solomon great wisdom, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, and his fame spread through all the nations round about.

He spoke three thousand proverbs, many of which you may read in the book of Proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. He spoke of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the herb that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fishes; and people of all nations, both far and near, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and to ask him hard questions.

Whose Child?

On one occasion two women stood before him.

"O my lord," one woman said, "this woman and I live in the same house; and each of us had a child, both of them boys, and my child was three days older than hers. It so happened that we two were left alone in the house; no one else was there with us. Early in the night this woman's baby died. At midnight she rose

up and took my son from beside me, while I slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. In the morning when I rose up, behold, my child was dead. After weeping a while, I thought to examine the dead child; and behold, it was not my son at all. It was hers."

"No!" cried the other woman, "the live child is my son!" She held the child tightly to her bosom as she spoke.

"No!" cried the first woman, "the dead child is your son, and the live child is my son!"

So they argued back and forth angrily, before the king.

Then said the king, "One says, 'This is my son that lives, and your son is dead;' the other says, 'No, but your son is dead, and my son lives.'"

So saying, he knew what to do.

"Fetch me a sword!" he ordered.

A soldier brought a sword before the king.

"Divide the living child in two, and give half to one woman, and half to the other," the king commanded the soldier.

As the soldier was about to obey, the first, who was the real mother of the living child, cried out to the king, "O my lord, do not kill my child! Give it to her! Give it to her!"

The king looked at the other woman to see what she would say.

"It shall be neither mine nor hers; divide it," she said.

Then the king looked at the first woman. "Give her the living child," he said; "do not kill it; she is its mother."

All Israel heard of this decision and they honored the king; for they saw the wisdom of God was in him.

The Queen of Sheba

When the queen of Sheba heard, in far-off Arabia, of the fame and the wisdom of Solomon, she came to prove him with hard questions.

The queen arrived in Jerusalem with a very great train of

attendants, riding on camels, and bearing rich gifts of spices, gold, and precious stones. The king gave her a royal welcome.

She talked with him of all that was in her heart, and the king answered all her questions. There was nothing hid that he did not tell her, as she listened to his wisdom.

When the queen had seen the temple the king had built, his own palace, the richness of his table, his numerous officers and servants and their apparel, his cupbearers, the staircase by which he went up from his palace to the temple, and all the glory of Jerusalem, she was lost in wonder. There was no spirit left in her.

"It was a true report that I heard in my own land of your acts and your wisdom," she exclaimed. "But I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and wealth far exceed all that I heard. Happy are your men, happy are your servants, who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom. Blessed be the Lord your God who delights in you, and set you on the throne of Israel."

Then she gave gifts to the king, much gold, and of spices a very great store, and precious stones. There never was seen such an abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

Solomon in turn, not to be outdone, gave the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatever she asked, besides the royal gifts which he gave her as king.

Then bidding her host farewell, she gathered her long train of attendants and camels, and set out for her own country.

Solomon's Riches

Now much gold came to Solomon each year, besides what he had from the merchants, and from the trade of the spice dealers, and from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country.

The king made two hundred targets and three hundred shields, all of beaten gold, and hung them on the walls of his palace.

Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the finest gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind. There were arms on each side by the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the arms; and twelve lions, six on one side, and six on the other side, stood upon the six steps. There was not a throne like it in any kingdom.

All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels in the royal palace were of pure gold. None were of silver; for silver was thought little of in the days of Solomon.

The king had at sea a navy with the navy of King Hiram of Tyre. Once every three years the navy came home, bringing gold and silver and ivory, apes, and peacocks. So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth for riches and wisdom.

People from all lands came to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart. They brought every man his present, vessels of silver and of gold, and garments, armor, and spices, horses and mules.

Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he kept in the chariot cities and in Jerusalem. The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as the sycamore trees in the valley, for abundance. He had horses brought from Egypt, and from that country came linen yarn, also, which the king's merchants received at a price.

Yet all these things were only a part of the riches of the king who ruled over all the kings from the river Euphrates even to the land of the Philistines, and to the borders of Egypt.

Solomon's Sin

Yet with all his wisdom and wealth Solomon was not wise enough to guard against wrongdoing.

To keep up his great wealth, he laid heavy burdens upon the shoulders of his people. While he and his nobles and princes gloried in their riches, his people were poor and oppressed.

As if this were not enough, he married many wives, the daughters of the idol-worshipping kings around about. So it happened that when Solomon grew old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

For this cause the Lord became very angry with Solomon, and punished him.

"Since you have not kept my commandments," the Lord told him, "and have not walked in the steps of your father, David, I will surely take the kingdom from your son, and will give it to another. But I will leave him one tribe, for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Then the Lord stirred up enemies against Solomon. Even Jer-o-bo-am, the son of Ne-bat, Solomon's servant, lifted up his hand against the king. This man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor, and when the king saw that he was industrious, he promoted him.

One day, as Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, A-hi-jah the prophet met him in the way. Now the prophet was wearing a new garment, and the two men were alone in a field.

Ahijah took off his new garment, and tore it into twelve pieces before the startled eyes of the young man.

"Take these ten pieces," he said to him; "for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you, because he has forsaken me, and worshiped other gods. The other tribes I will give to Solomon's son for David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake.'"

When Solomon heard of this, he tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam escaped to Egypt, where he remained until the death of Solomon.

After Solomon's death the ten tribes rebelled and made Jeroboam king over Israel, because Re-ho-bo-am, Solomon's son, said he would make their taxes even heavier than his father had made them. Rehoboam was still king, however, of Judah and a part of Benjamin, the remaining two tribes.

Thus the words of the Lord, spoken to Solomon and to Ahijah the prophet, came true. The great kingdom built up by David and Solomon was torn in two parts—the kingdom of Judah, over which Solomon's son Rehoboam ruled, and the kingdom of Israel, over which Jeroboam became king.

Jeroboam made Shechem the capital of the northern kingdom, as Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom.

Then King Jeroboam said to himself, "If my people go up to sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem, their hearts will be turned again to the king of Judah, and they will kill me, and reunite the two kingdoms."

So he made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "You have gone up long enough to Jerusalem. See your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Then he set up one calf at Bethel, and the other at Dan; and this thing became a great sin, because the people turned aside from the worship of God, and worshiped the two golden calves.

* * * * *

"And so," added Aunt Maria, "you see that the great kingdom that David built up was divided by the foolishness of his grandson into two kingdoms—the kingdom of Judah, including the tribe of Benjamin; and the kingdom of Israel, including the other ten tribes. The kings that followed Rehoboam and Jeroboam did not amount to much; so I want you to know about two great prophets named Elijah and Elisha, who tried to keep the people from worshiping idols. You may read about both of these heroes in Uncle Ben's book."

The children had not read very far before they were delighted to find that the stories were told in the words of Elisha, who was the servant of Elijah, and continued his work after his master had been carried into heaven.



ELIJAH WENT UP IN THE CHARIOT BY A WHIRLWIND INTO HEAVEN

XVII

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

A Strange Message

WHEN A-sa was king of Judah, A-hab began to reign over the Kingdom of Israel; and King Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord by marrying Jez-e-bel, the daughter of the heathen king of Zidon who worshiped Baal. As if that were not enough, the king built a great temple for the god Baal, and an altar in the city of Sa-ma-ri-a. Even innocent children were sometimes offered as sacrifices to this cruel god. So King Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

About this time there lived in the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, a great prophet, named Elijah.

One day Elijah came out of the mountains, crossed the Jordan to Samaria, and suddenly appeared before Ahab.

Dressed in a rough sheepskin coat, bound about his waist with a leather girdle, his long hair hanging over his shoulders, the prophet addressed the king.

"As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand," he said, "there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Then this strange man, whom the king had never seen or heard of before, vanished as quickly as he came.

What to make of this startling message, the angry king did not know. He searched far and wide to find the prophet, but no one knew where he had gone.

Meanwhile, the word of the Lord was directing Elijah.

"Get away from here at once," he was told; "turn eastward and hide by the brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. There you shall drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed you."

So Elijah found the brook, and hid there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and again in the evening; and he drank water out of the brook.

After a while the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land. Again the word of the Lord came to him.

"Rise up," he was told, "and go to Zar-e-phath in Zi-don. I have commanded a poor widow there to provide for you."

Obedying the command, Elijah journeyed to Zarephath.

At the gate of the town, he saw a woman gathering sticks.

"Fetch me, I pray you, a little water that I may drink," he called to her.

As she was going after the water, he called to her again, "Bring me, I pray you, a piece of bread in your hand," for he was hungry as well as thirsty after his journey.

"As the Lord lives," she replied, "I have not even a cake; but only a handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the jar; and, see, I am gathering these sticks that I may cook it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."



THE RAVENS BROUGHT HIM BREAD AND MEAT

"Do not fear," Elijah said; "go and make me a little cake first, and bring it to me, and afterwards make for you and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the jar of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'"

So the woman did as Elijah had said; and she, and her son, and Elijah ate for many days. The barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the jar of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord.

After these things, the son of the woman fell sick; his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.

"What have I to do with you, O man of God?" she cried in her grief. "Have you come here to bring death to my son?"

"Give me your son," the prophet said.

Then he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up to the chamber where he slept, and laid him upon his own bed.

"O Lord my God," he prayed, "have you also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by letting her son die?"

Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord again.

"O Lord my God," he prayed, "let this child's soul come to him again."

His prayer was answered, for the soul of the child returned, and he revived.

Then Elijah took up the child, and carried him down, and gave him to his mother.

"See, your son lives," he said.

"Now I know that you are a man of God," the mother replied, joyously, "and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

So Elijah passed many days with the poor widow and her son, where King Ahab's spies could not find him.

The Contest with the False Prophets

In the third year of the drought, when the famine was very severe in Samaria, the word of the Lord came again to Elijah.

"Go, show yourself to Ahab," the Lord said, "and I will send rain upon the earth."

About this time King Ahab called O-ba-di-ah, the governor of his house, to him.

"Go through the land, and visit all the springs and the brooks," was his order. "Perhaps we may find grass enough to save our horses and mules alive; else we shall lose them."

So they divided the land between them, Ahab going one way, and Obadiah the other.

As Obadiah went on his way, Elijah met him. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, and he also knew the prophet.

"Is it you, my lord Elijah?" he asked, bowing low before him.

"It is I," Elijah answered. "Go, tell the king, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'"

"What have I done, that you should deliver your servant into the hand of Ahab to be slain?" Obadiah asked. "As the Lord lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to seek you; and when they replied, 'He is not here,' he made them swear that they had not found you. Now you say, 'Go, tell your master, Elijah is here,' and, as soon as I am gone, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you away. When Ahab comes, and does not find you, he will kill me. But I have feared the Lord from my youth. Was it not told you what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred of them in a cave fifty by fifty, and fed them with bread and water? If I tell Ahab, and you are not here, he will kill me."

"As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him to-day," was Elijah's reply.

So Obadiah took the message to the king, and Ahab came to meet Elijah.

"Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Ahab cried on seeing Elijah.

"I have not troubled Israel," Elijah replied sternly; "but you, and your house, who have forsaken the commandments of the

Lord and worshiped Baal—you have troubled Israel. Now send and gather to me the people of Israel on Mount Carmel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Ash-e-rah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

So Ahab gathered the people of Israel and the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

Drawing near to the people, Elijah addressed them.

"How long will you halt between two opinions?" he demanded. "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

The people did not answer him a word.

"I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord," Elijah went on; "but Baal's prophets stand here, four hundred and fifty men. Let them choose two bullocks, one for themselves, and one for me. Let them kill theirs, cut it in pieces, and lay the pieces on the altar over the wood, but put no fire under. I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under. Then let the prophets of Baal call upon the name of their god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord; and the God that answers by fire, let him be God!"

"It is well spoken!" all the people shouted.

"Choose you one bullock," said Elijah in stern tones to the heathen priests; "and dress it first, for you are many; and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire under."

The prophets of Baal did so, and called on the name of their god from morning until noon.

"O Baal, hear us! O Baal, answer us!" the whole four hundred and fifty cried.

But there was no voice, nor any answer. They leaped about the altar, crying aloud to their god, but there was no reply.

When noon came Elijah mocked them.

"Cry louder," he said; "for he is a god; either he is talking or he is pursuing his enemies, or he is on a journey. Perhaps he is sleeping, and must be awakened."

So they cried louder, and cut themselves, as the heathen

sometimes do, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out.

When midday was past, they prophesied and prayed all the afternoon until the evening offering, while the king and Elijah and all the people looked on. But there was no voice, nor any answer, nor any notice whatever.

Then Elijah came forward.

"Come near to me," he commanded, and all the people did so.

Then Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down when the altar of Baal was built. He took twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes; and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. He made a trench around the altar, put the wood in order on it, cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood.

"Fill four barrels with water," he ordered, "and pour the water over the wood, and over the offering;" and they did so.

"Do it the second time!" he ordered; and they did it the second time.

"Do it the third time!" he ordered; and they did it the third time.

The water ran over the wood, and over the offering, and flooded the trench around the altar.

When the time came for the evening offering, Elijah stood beside the altar.

"O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel," he prayed, "let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Lord, art God!"

Awed by the prayer of the prophet, the people stood silent, waiting.

Then suddenly, the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust; and licked up the water in the trench.

When the people saw it, they fell on their faces in worship.

"The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" they confessed.

"Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one escape!" commanded Elijah. "Take them down to the brook Ki-shon, and slay them there;" and they did so.

Ahab saw it, but said not a word.

"Go up again, eat and drink," Elijah told him; "there is the sound of abundance of rain."

So Ahab ate and drank, for he had been fasting all day.

The prophet went to the top of Mount Carmel, bowed himself to the earth, and put his face between his knees.

"Go up now, look toward the sea," he told his servant, after a little while.

The servant went up and looked. "There is nothing," said he on his return.

"Go again seven times," was the command. The servant did so.

At the end of the seventh time, he came running.

"Look!" he cried. "A cloud is rising out of the sea, no bigger than a man's hand."

"Go, say to Ahab, 'Make ready your chariot, and get down, before the rain stops you.'"

In a little while the heavens grew black with flying clouds, and a great tempest of rain caught Ahab as he rode back to his palace at Jez-re-el.

The hand of the Lord was upon Elijah, who was so happy that he tightened his girdle, and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel.

"Surely now," he thought, rejoicing as he ran, "the people will throw away their idols, and return to the Lord."

But the people did not forsake the worship of idols; and neither did Ahab, who at last met a coward's death, of which you may read in the twenty-second chapter of the first Book of Kings.

The Chariot of Fire

It came to pass, when the Lord would take Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went from Gilgal, and I prepared to go with him.

"Tarry here, I pray you, Elisha," my master said to me, "for the Lord has sent me as far as Beth-el."

"As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives," I replied, "I will not leave you."

So we went down to Bethel, and the sons of the prophets who served God at Bethel came out to meet me.

"Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from your head to-day?" they asked.

"Yes, I know it; hold your peace," I told them.

"Tarry here, I pray you," Elijah said; "for the Lord has sent me to Jericho."

"As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives," I said, "I will not leave you."

So we came to Jericho, and the sons of the prophets who served God at Jericho came near to me.

"Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from your head to-day?" they asked.

"Yes, I know it; hold your peace," I answered.

"Tarry here, I pray you," Elijah said, "for the Lord has sent me to Jordan."

"As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you," I replied again.

So we two went on, and stood by the Jordan; but fifty men of the sons of the prophets followed us, and stood afar off.

Elijah took his mantle, and wrapping it together, struck the waters, and they parted so that we two went over on dry ground.

When we were gone over, Elijah said, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you."

"I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me," was my request.

"You have asked a hard thing," he said; "nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so; but if not, it shall not be so."

It came to pass, as we still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted us from one another; and Elijah went up in the chariot by a whirlwind into heaven.

When I saw it, I cried aloud:

"My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

He was gone; I saw him no more.

Then I took hold of my own clothes, and tore them in two pieces, picked up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him as he was taken up, and returned and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" I cried.

So saying, I struck the waters with the mantle of Elijah, and the waters parted as before, and I went over.

When the sons of the prophets, who were waiting, saw me, they came to meet me.

"The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha," they said, and bowed themselves to the ground.

After that, they said, "See now, there are with us fifty strong men; let them go, we pray you, and search for your master. It may be that the Spirit of the Lord has taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley."

"You shall not send," I replied; but when they urged me till I was ashamed, I said, "Send."

They sent therefore fifty men, and they searched the hills and valleys for three days, but did not find him.

When they came back to Jericho, where I waited, I said, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?"

From that time on I went about Israel teaching the sons of the prophets, and comforting the people who refused to worship idols or bow the knee to Baal.

How a Syrian General was Healed

Next, let me tell you the story of a little slave girl and a famous general, named Na-a-man.

Naaman, chief captain of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, a mighty man of valor; but he was a leper.

Now, there lived in Naaman's house a little Hebrew maid who had been brought away captive out of the land of Israel, and she waited on Naaman's wife.

"Would God my master were with the prophet in Samaria!" she said to her mistress one day. "He would cure him of this terrible disease."

Her mistress did not pay much attention to the child's talk, but Naaman heard of it, as also did the king of Syria.

"Go," said the king to the chief captain, "I will send you with a letter to the king of Israel."

So Naaman set off in his chariot with an escort of soldiers, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment as a gift for the man who should heal him.

In due time he arrived in Samaria and presented his letter to the king of Israel.

"When this letter comes to you, see, I have sent with it my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy," the letter read.

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes, and cried, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man asks me to cure a leper? Consider, I pray you, how he seeks a quarrel with me."

The news of Naaman's errand soon came to my ears, and I sent word to the king.

"Why have you rent your clothes?" was my message. "Send the leper to me, and he shall know there is a God in Israel."

So the Syrian captain drove up with his horses and chariots,

and stood at my door. I sent my servant out to him with this message:

"Go wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come again, and you shall be clean."

When Naaman heard this he was angry, for he was a very great man in his own country.

"Surely, I thought," he told his men, "he would come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure me. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?"

So he turned his horses' heads and drove off in a great rage. Happily, he had faithful servants who were not afraid to speak the truth.

"My father," one of them said, "if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather when he says to you, 'Wash and be clean'?"

Without a word Naaman drove to the Jordan, and dipped himself seven times in the river, just as he had been told to do; and his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Straightway the healed man returned to Samaria, he and all his company, and stood again at my door, and this time I went out to him.

"Now I know," he cried, "that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Therefore, take a present of your servant," and he offered me his silver and gold.

"As the Lord lives, before whom I stand," I answered, "I will receive none."

Then he urged me to take it; but I refused, and told him to go in peace.

So he left me, and set out on his return to his own land.

After he had gone, my servant Ge-ha-zi thought to himself, "See, my master has spared this Naaman, the Syrian, in refusing

to accept the present which he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him, and take something of him."

So Gehazi followed; and when Naaman saw him running, he lighted down from his chariot to meet him.

"Is all well?" he inquired.

"All is well," Gehazi replied. "My master has sent me to say, 'Two young men of the sons of the prophets have just come in from the hill country of Ephraim; give them, I pray you, a talent of silver and two changes of raiment.'"

"Be content; take two talents," Naaman urged him, putting two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of raiment, and laying them upon two of his servants, who carried them before him.

When he reached home, Gehazi took the silver and the raiment and concealed them in the house, and let the men go.

"Where have you been, Gehazi?" I asked when he came in and stood before me.

"Your servant went nowhere," he replied.

"Did I not know when the man stopped his chariot to meet you?" I said sternly. "Is it a time to receive money and garments? For this, the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and yours forever."

Then he went out a leper, as white as snow.



AT LAST THEY TOOK UP JONAH AND THREW HIM OVERBOARD INTO THE SEA

XVIII

JONAH, THE RUNAWAY PROPHET

WHEN the story hour came the next day, Billy asked his aunt what happened after the days of Elijah and Elisha.

"I will answer that question a little later, my dear," she replied; "but first I want you to hear about a man who tried to run away from his duty." So she began the story of Jonah.

* * * * *

He is Swallowed by a Great Fish

One day the word of the Lord came to the prophet Jonah, telling him to rebuke the city of Nineveh for its wickedness.

"Arise," was the command; "go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for the wickedness of its people is come up before me."

But Jonah was afraid; and tried to escape from the presence of the Lord. Instead of doing as he was told, he ran off to Joppa, a seaport on the shore of the Great Sea.

There he found a ship going to the distant land of Tarshish; so he paid his fare, and went aboard.

The ship had not gone far from land before the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and a terrible tempest arose, so that the ship was in danger of sinking.

The sailors were afraid; they cried to their gods to save them, and they cast their goods into the sea to lighten the ship. But the waves rose higher.

Jonah had gone down into his cabin, and there he lay, tired out, and fast asleep. The captain came to him and shook him.

"What do you mean, O sleeper?" he cried. "Rise up, and call upon your God, lest we perish!"

The sailors said among themselves, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose fault this evil has overtaken us."

So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon the runaway Jonah.

"Tell us, who is to blame for this evil that has come upon us?" they demanded. "What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country, and who are you?"

"I am a Hebrew," Jonah replied; "and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Then he told them why he had fled from the presence of the Lord.

When the sailors heard this, they were exceedingly afraid, and said, "What is this that you have done? What shall we do that the sea may be calm again?"

Even while they were speaking the rising storm was lashing the ship in its fury.

"Take me up, and throw me into the sea," cried Jonah; "so shall the sea be calm to you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

Fearing to do this, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not; for the sea grew more and more tempestuous, and the waves rose higher and higher.

210 CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE DAYS OF KINGS

"O Lord," they prayed, "let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood."

But the storm did not abate. At last they took up Jonah and threw him overboard into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.

Then the sailors feared the Lord exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice and made vows.

As Jonah fell into the sea, the billows rolled over him; he sank into the depths like a stone, and the weeds were wrapped about his head.

But Jonah's time to die had not yet come; for the Lord had prepared a great fish, which swallowed him up, just as he had lost all hope.

For three days and three nights Jonah lay inside the fish and prayed. At the end of the third night the Lord spoke to the fish, and the fish vomited Jonah out on the shore. Eagerly the rescued man scrambled to the dry land.

He Escapes, and Obeys God

The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time.

"Rise up," was the second command, "go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to the people that they turn from their wickedness."

This time Jonah went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city—so great that the circuit of it was a three days' journey.

Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and as he went he cried to the people who crowded about him:

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed!"

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed!"

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed!"

When the people of Nineveh heard the message, they believed God, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them;

even the king arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

The king also made a decree and published it through the streets of Nineveh, saying:

“Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed nor drink water: but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let the people cry mightily unto God: let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”

When God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil which he said he would bring upon them; and he did it not.

He Rebels Again

This forgiveness displeased Jonah exceedingly; and he prayed to the Lord, and said:

“O Lord, did I not say this, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to fly to Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of pity, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I pray, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.”

“Are you doing well to be angry?” the Lord asked him.

Then Jonah went out of the city on the east side, and there made him a hut, and sat down under its shadow, until he might see what would become of the city.

Now God prepared a vine, and made it spring up over Jonah, so that it might cast a shadow over his head. So Jonah was very glad because of the shade of the vine.

God also prepared a worm, and the worm ate the vine, so that it withered. When the sun arose God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, so that he fainted from the heat, and prayed that he might die. “It is better for me to die than to live,” he murmured.

"Do you well to be angry for the vine?" God asked him.

"I do well to be angry, even unto death," the prophet replied.

Then the Lord said, "You have had pity on the vine, for which you have not labored, neither made it to grow; which sprang up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than a hundred thousand children, so young that they cannot tell their right hands from their left; and also many helpless cattle? Should you not have pity on Nineveh when it turns from its evil way, even as I had pity on you?"

To this Jonah could make no reply.

* * * * *

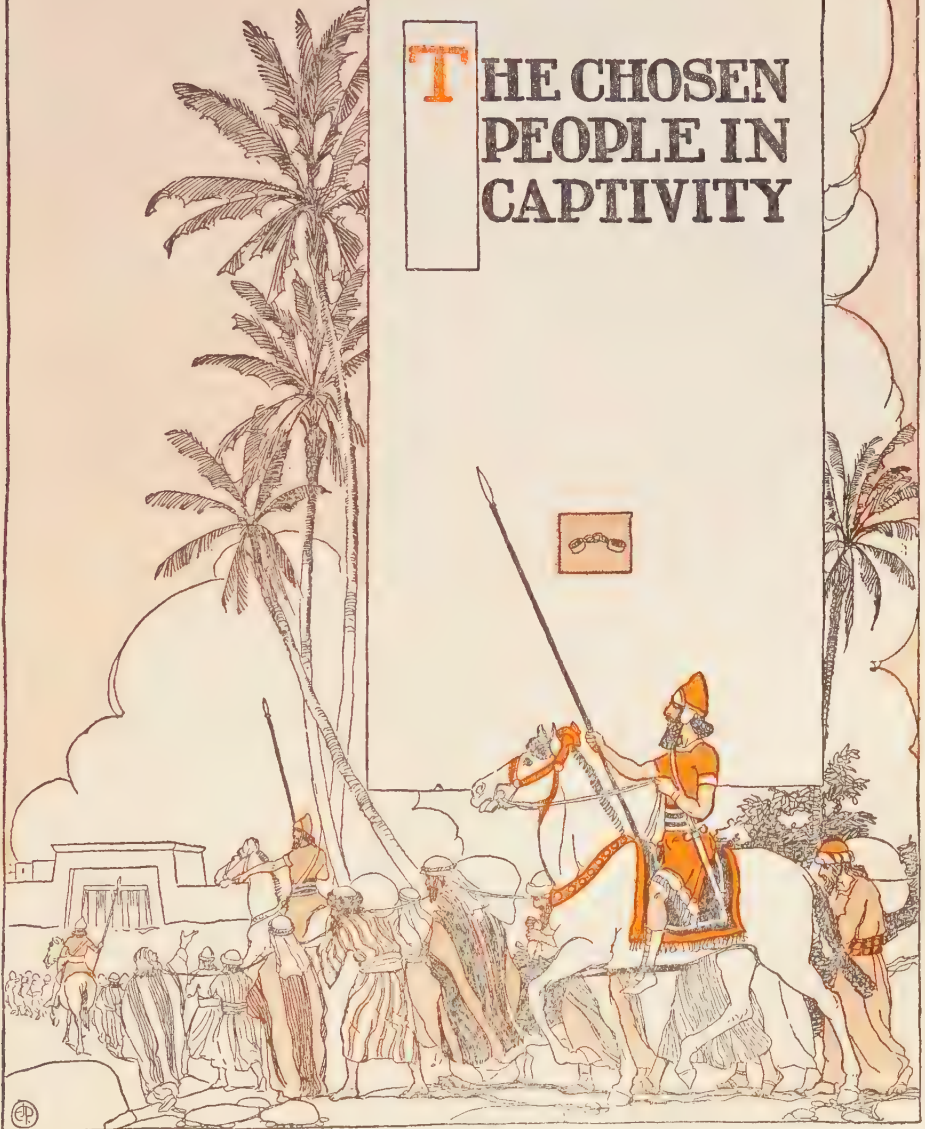
"Now, children," said Aunt Maria, "I will answer your questions about what happened to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah after the times of Elijah and Elisha. Listen while I read:

"About seventy years after the death of Elisha, the Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel and carried the people away captive, thus bringing the northern kingdom to an end.

"The kingdom of Judah continued for more than another hundred years after the captivity of Israel; then, its people, too, were carried captive to Babylon, where they remained about seventy years. But they did not utterly forsake the true God, and part of them were allowed to return to Jerusalem.' "

Then she added, "One of the most interesting stories about what happened during the captivity of the Chosen People is the story of Esther, a captive maiden who became queen. Read about her in the Book of Esther, and see how she saved her people."

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN CAPTIVITY



THE CHOSEN PEOPLE IN CAPTIVITY

“He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.”—ISAIAH 61:1.



SO ESTHER DREW NEAR IN SAFETY, AND TOUCHED THE TOP OF THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE

XIX

ESTHER, THE CAPTIVE MAID WHO BECAME QUEEN

BEFORE opening her Bible, Mary Frances peeped into Uncle Ben's book, half hoping that Queen Esther would tell her own story; but no—there it was as related by Esther's cousin, Mord-e-cai. She read the first few lines aloud to find out who Mordecai was. Billy begged her to go on; and so she went on and on to the end.

* * * * *

Queen Vashti Refuses to Obey the King

There once was a great king of Persia, A-has-u-e-rus, who reigned from In-di-a to E-thi-o-pi-a, over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. I knew him well, for the God of Israel raised me up to be second in rank to him, as by a miracle.

In the third year of his reign, in the pride of his glory, he made a great feast in his palace at Shu-shan, to show the riches of his kingdom and the power of his might.

The first part of the feast, which was for the princes and nobles, lasted one hundred and eighty days. At the end of that time he made a feast of seven days for all the people, both small and great, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. Great curtains of white, green, and blue cloth, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple, hung on silver rings from pillars of marble. Couches of gold and silver rested upon pavements of red, and blue, and white, and black marble. On these the feasters reclined, and drank from cups of gold.

Queen Vash-ti also made a feast for the women in her royal house.

On the last day of the feast, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he ordered seven of his officers to bring Vashti the queen before him to the men's feast to show the people and the princes her beauty; for the queen was very fair to look upon.

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command; for it was thought shame for a woman to show her face at such a time.

Then the king was full of wrath; his anger burned within him; and he called his wise men, the seven princes of Persia, before the throne.

"What shall be done to Queen Vashti according to law, because she refuses to obey the command of the king?" he inquired.

Prince Me-mu-can stood before the king and the princes, and gave answer to the king's inquiry:

"If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him; and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate to another that is better than she."

This advice pleased the king and the seven princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan.

Then the king's servants said to him, "Let fair young maidens

be gathered from all parts of the kingdom; and let the maiden which best pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

This also pleased the king; and he did so.

Now at that time I lived in the palace at Shushan. My name was Mordecai; I was one of the Jews who had been carried away from Jerusalem into captivity by Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, the king of Bab-y-lon. I had with me my uncle's daughter Es-ther, a fair and beautiful maiden. When her father and mother died, I took her and brought her up as my own daughter.

Esther is Made Queen

So it came to pass, when the maidens were gathered at Shushan for the king to choose a queen, that Esther was brought to the king's house with them.

In due time Esther came before the king, and when the king saw her he loved her above all the other women. She obtained favor in his sight more than all the other maidens; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast for Esther, and he invited all his princes and his officers, and granted favors to the provinces and scattered gifts, according to the bounty of the king.

The king had not yet been told that Esther belonged to the captive people, or that she was a Jewish maiden; for I had charged her that she should not tell it.

In those days, I often sat in the king's gate, so that I might learn how Esther fared. For some cause the two guards who kept the gate were very angry and plotted to lay hands on the king and kill him. When the thing became fully known to me, I sent word of the plot to Esther the queen; and Esther told the king of the danger, in my name.

When inquiry was made into the matter, it was found to be true, and both men were hanged on a tree; and an account of it was written in the book of records before the king.

Haman Seeks Revenge

After these things, one Haman, an enemy of the Jews, won great favor with the king, so that the king advanced him above all the other princes that were with him. All the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman; for the king had so commanded. But I bowed not, nor did I do him reverence.

Then the king's servants, who were in the king's gate, said to me, "Why do you disobey the king's command?"

Now when they spoke daily to me, and I would not listen, they told Haman, to see whether my words would stand; for I had told them that I was a Jew, and revered God only.

When Haman saw that I did not bow, nor do him reverence, he was full of wrath. But he thought it beneath him to lay hands on one poor captive Jew alone; therefore, he plotted to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom, and to that end he accused them to the king, myself among them.

"There is a certain people, the Jews, scattered abroad among the provinces of the kingdom," said Haman; "and their laws are different from ours; neither do they keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live. If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury."

Then the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman, the Jews' enemy; and said, "The silver is yours, the people also; do with them as it seems good to you."

The king's secretaries were called in, and they wrote all that Haman commanded to the king's lieutenants, and to the governors of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. In the name of the king the letters were written, and sealed with the king's ring.

The letters were sent posthaste into all the king's provinces: to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day; and to despoil them of their goods.

The letters were sent, being hastened by the king's command, and the decree was given in the palace at Shushan; and the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was troubled.

The Great Mourning of Mordecai

When I heard all that was done, I rent my clothes, and put on sackcloth, and sprinkled ashes on my head, and went out into the streets of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry; and I came and stood before the king's gate; for no one clothed in mourning was allowed to enter the palace.

In every province, wherever the king's decree came, there was great sorrow among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Esther's maids came and told her what I did. Then the queen was exceedingly grieved; and she sent new clothing to me, but I would not receive it.

Then Esther called one of her trusted officers, and sent him to me at the king's gate to learn why I mourned.

I told him the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury; and I gave him a copy of the king's order to kill all the Jews, for Esther to read. I told him to charge her from me that she should go before the king and plead with him on behalf of her people.

The officer carried my words to Esther, and she sent back this message:

"All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces do know that, whoever shall come before the king in the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him—that he be put to death, except such as to whom the king shall hold out his golden sceptre that he may live; but I have not been called to come before the king for thirty days."

When I heard this I returned answer to Esther:

"Think not that you shall escape in the king's house, more

than all the other Jews. For if you hold your peace at this time, then relief and deliverance shall come to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall perish; and who knows but that you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther Pleads for Mordecai

To this message Esther sent this brave answer:

"Go, gather together all the Jews that are living in Shushan, and fast for me; and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and on the third day I will go before the king, which is contrary to law—and if I perish, I perish."

So I went my way and gathered all the Jews in the city, and we did as Esther commanded us.

On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes, and at the risk of her life, stood in the inner court of the king's house, where the king sat upon his royal throne over against the gate of the house.

When the king saw Esther the queen standing there in the inner court without permission, a look of surprise spread over his face; and then—the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand.

So Esther drew near in safety, and touched the top of the golden sceptre, while the courtiers looked on.

"What is your petition and what is your request, Queen Esther?" asked the king. "It shall be granted you even to the half of my kingdom."

"If it please the king," Esther answered, "let the king and Haman come to-day to the banquet that I have prepared."

"Cause Haman to make haste," said the king, "that he may do as Esther has said."

So the king and Haman came to the queen's banquet.

Again the king asked Esther, "What is your petition, and

what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

Then answered Esther, "My petition and my request is, if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet I shall prepare for them on the morrow; and then I will tell the king what I have in mind."

That day Haman went from the banquet hall joyful and with a glad heart; but when he passed me in the king's gate and saw that I neither stood up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against me.

Yet he said nothing; but when he reached home, he called for his wife Ze-resh and his friends and told them of the glory of his riches, and of his many children, and how the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

"Yes," Haman said; "moreover, Esther the queen allowed no man come in with the king to the banquet she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow I am also invited by her together with the king. Yet all this means nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate."

Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends to him:

"Let a gallows be made seventy-five feet high, and to-morrow speak to the king, that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go in merrily with the king to the banquet."

The idea pleased Haman; and he ordered the gallows to be built.

The Downfall of Haman

On that night the king could not sleep, so he ordered the book of records to be read to him. The book told of the two plotters who had sought to kill the king, and how I had reported the plot, and thus saved the king's life.

"What honor and reward has been done to Mordecai for this?" inquired the king.

"Nothing has been done for him," the king's servants replied.

"Who is in the court?" asked the king.

Now Haman was come into the outer court of the king's house, to speak to the king about hanging me on the gallows that he had prepared for me.

"Haman stands in the court," an officer replied.

"Let him come in," said the king.

So Haman came in.

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" the king asked him.

Now Haman said in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than myself?"

So Haman answered accordingly.

"For the man whom the king delights to honor," he said, "let royal apparel be brought such as the king wears, and the horse which the king rides upon, and the crown royal which is set on his head; and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array withal the man whom the king delights to honor, and cause him to ride through the streets of the city; and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"

"Make haste," said the king to Haman, "and take the apparel and the horse, as you have said, and do even so to Mordecai, who sits at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that you have spoken."

Haman shrank back in horror, but the king had spoken, and he had no choice but to obey. Reluctantly he took the apparel and the horse, and came and put the king's apparel on me, set the crown on my head, and led me on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaimed before me, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor."

After my royal ride was over, I asked no questions, but came again to the king's gate, and sat there as before.

But Haman hurried to his house, mourning, and having his

head covered; and told his wife and all his friends everything that had befallen him.

While they were yet talking, the king's messenger came in haste to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman came to the queen's banquet on the second day, and the king again said to the queen:

"What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted. And what is your request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

"If I have found favor in your eyes, O king, and if it please the king," answered Queen Esther, "let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request; for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish."

"Who is he, and where is he that dares presume in his heart to do so?" demanded the king.

"An adversary and an enemy—even this wicked Haman!" the queen replied.

Then Haman was afraid before the king and queen.

The king arose in great anger from the table and went into the palace garden; and Haman stood up to plead for his life with Esther the queen; for he saw that the king had determined evil against him.

Soon the king returned from the palace garden and saw Haman groveling at Esther's feet, pleading with her to spare his life.

The king gazed at Haman in a fury of anger, and the officers covered Haman's face.

"Behold," said one of the officers, "the gallows seventy-five feet high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, stands ready."

"Hang him thereon!" was the king's command.

So they hanged Haman the same day on the gallows he had erected for me; and the king's wrath was pacified.

On that day the king gave the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, to Esther the queen.

I also came before the king; for Esther had told who I was, and what I had done for her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to me, and I was made ruler in the king's house.

Esther Pleads for Her People

Esther fell down at the king's feet, and prayed him with tears to stop the mischief which Haman had plotted against her people. Then the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre, and she arose, and stood before the king.

"If it please the king," she said, "and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, let it be written to reverse the letters which Haman wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces; for how can I live to see the murder of my people?"

"Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged Haman on the gallows. Write also to the Jews as you like, in the king's name, and seal the writing with the king's ring," said the king to Esther and to me.

Now the decree which Haman had sent, to destroy the Jews, could not be changed, for the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be altered. So the king's secretaries were called, and letters were written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring; and were sent to all the Jews by riders on horses, mules, camels, and swift dromedaries.

In these letters the king granted the Jews who were in every city the right to defend their lives against all who attacked them.

I went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad.

Haman's Plot is Foiled

So the posts rode upon swift steeds, hastened by the king's command, and the decree was published abroad in all the provinces

that the Jews should be ready on the day set by Haman to defend themselves against their enemies.

In every province, and in every city where the king's command came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day.

When the time came, the Jews defended themselves and smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword. In Shushan alone they slew five hundred, among them the ten sons of Haman, their enemy.

The other Jews that were in the provinces gathered themselves together, and defended their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of them that hated them seventy-five thousand; but on their goods they laid not their hand.

* * * * *

"How brave Queen Esther was, Aunt," said the little girl, as the three were talking over the story.

"Yes, she was brave," replied her aunt; "and the Jews celebrate their deliverance to this day. I hope you will enjoy the stories of Daniel and his friends just as much, if not more, than the one you have just learned. You will find them in the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel."

"Daniel," said Billy, "Daniel was a very brave man, I remember. I wish—I hope—"

"Yes," interrupted his aunt, smiling, "you will find Daniel in Uncle Ben's book; you may read that, too."



‘Lo, I See Four Men, Loose, Walking in the Fire, and They Are Not Hurt’

XX

DANIEL AND HIS THREE FRIENDS

They Refuse to Eat the King's Food

WHEN I was but a boy I lived in Jerusalem. One day, Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, the king of Babylon, swept down with his army upon the city and captured it, carrying off many captives with him, of whom I was one. He also carried away the gold and silver vessels from the temple, which he afterwards put in the treasure house of his god.

Thus I became an exile in a heathen land, but I never forgot the city of my fathers, or my father's God.

Soon after we came to Babylon the king ordered his chief steward to select from among his captives the Jewish youths of noble rank, such as had ability to stand in the king's palace—to be trained in the learning and language of the Chal-de-ans.

The king appointed for them a daily portion of food and wine

from the royal table; and at the end of three years' training, the young students were to stand in the king's court.

I was among those chosen, as were three of my friends. The Babylonians gave me a new name, "Bel-te-shaz-zar," and called my friends, "Sha-drach," "Me-shach," and "A-bed-ne-go."

We four purposed in our hearts that we would not defile ourselves with the king's food, nor with his wine, which were forbidden by the law of God, but would eat only vegetable food and drink water, and this we obtained permission to do.

Now God gave us knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and to me he gave the gift of understanding visions and dreams.

At the end of the time appointed all the youths who had been in training were brought before the king; and the king selected us four to stand before him in the palace.

In every matter of wisdom and understanding of which the king inquired of us, he said, "I find them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters of all my realm."

The Idol and the Stone

In the second year of his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him.

Then the king commanded the magicians, the enchanters, and the wise men to be called in to tell him his dream.

They came in and stood before the king.

"I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream," the king said to them.

"O king, live forever; tell your servants the dream, and we will show the meaning," the wise men replied.

"The thing is gone from me," the king answered them. "If you do not make known to me the dream and the meaning of it, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap; but if you tell the dream and the meaning, you shall receive gifts, rewards, and great honor. So show it to me at once."

"Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will tell the meaning," the wise men answered the second time.

"I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see I have forgotten my dream," the king replied. "But if you do not make known the dream to me, there is but one law for you; for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me; so tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can tell me the meaning."

"There is no man upon the earth that can show a forgotten dream," they answered. "No king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such a thing of any magician, or enchanter, or wise man. It is a strange thing the king asks, for no one can tell such a thing, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with men."

At this answer, the king grew very angry and commanded all the wise men of Babylon to be destroyed.

So the order went out that all the wise men were to be killed; and they sought out me and my companions to kill us.

Then I said to A-ri-och, the captain of the king's guard, whom the king had appointed to kill the wise men of Babylon, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?"

So Arioch made the whole thing known to me.

I went at once to the king and begged that he would appoint a time, and I would tell him the dream and the meaning of it.

Then I went home and told my companions, and we asked the God of heaven to reveal this secret, lest we die with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

The secret was revealed to me in a vision that night, and I blessed the God of my fathers, who made known to me the king's matter.

"Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon," I said to Arioch, when I had found him; "bring me in before the king, and I will show the king his dream."

Then Arioch brought me before the king in haste.

"I have found a man, one of the Jewish captives, who will

make known to the king his dream," Arioch told his royal master.

"Are you able to tell me the dream I have forgotten, and the meaning of it?" the king demanded of me.

"The secret which the king demands, neither wise men, enchanters, nor magicians, can show the king; but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to the king what shall come to pass in the latter days.

"You saw, O king, in your dream a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and the aspect of it was terrible.

"As for this image, his head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his body and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part iron and part clay.

"You saw a stone cut out without hands, and this stone fell and struck the feet of the image which were of iron and clay, dashing them into pieces.

"Then the image fell down, and the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were all broken into pieces together, and became like chaff, and the wind blew them away. Then, as you looked, the stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The king's eyes were fastened on me as I continued:

"This is the dream, and I will tell the king its meaning. You, O king, are a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, the glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air he has given into your hand; and has made you ruler over them all: you are the head of gold.

"After you, a second kingdom of silver shall arise, inferior to you.

"After that, a third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the earth.

"After that a fourth kingdom shall arise, strong as iron.

But since you saw the feet, part of iron and part of clay, this shall be a divided kingdom, partly strong and partly broken, with the strength of iron and the weakness of clay.

"In the days of those kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, which shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

"Since you saw a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which broke in pieces the clay, the iron, the brass, the silver, and the gold, and grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth, the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the meaning sure."

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshiped me, but I told him again that God, not I, had revealed his secret.

"Of a truth," he answered, "your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you have been able to reveal this secret."

Then the king made me a great man, and gave me many gifts, and made me ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and the chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon. So I was to sit in the king's gate.

Then I requested the king that he appoint my three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, with me, over the affairs of the province of Babylon, and he did so; and we were glad of our high positions, because we were able to do much for the relief of our fellow captives.

The Fiery Furnace

Not content with the image he saw in his dreams, Nebuchadnezzar the king made a great image all of gold, ninety feet high, and nine feet wide; and he set it up in the plain of Du-ra, in the province of Babylon.

Then the king sent word to the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs,

and the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the golden image which he had set up.

So they all came and stood in the plain before the image.

Then the herald cried aloud:

"To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of music, you fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall the same hour be thrown into a burning fiery furnace."

Therefore, when the people heard the sound of the music, they all fell down and worshiped the golden image.

At that time, some of the wise men of the magicians, whose lives we had saved by telling the king his dream, brought an accusation against my three friends. They were afraid to accuse me, because I was the second man in the kingdom.

"O king, live forever," they said. "You have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the music shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have not obeyed you, nor worshiped the golden image which you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded these men to be brought before him.

"Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he demanded, "that you do not serve my god, nor worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of music to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if you do not worship, you shall be thrown the same hour into a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

"O Nebuchadnezzar," the three men replied, "we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If he so wills, our God

whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; but even if he does not so will, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury against the three men, and the appearance of his face was terrible, as he commanded the furnace to be made seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated.

He ordered the strongest soldiers in his army to bind the men and to throw them in. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace.

The king's orders were so urgent, and the furnace so exceeding hot, that the flames of the fire leaped out, and slew the soldiers, even as the three men fell down bound into the middle of the fiery furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, who sat there looking into the furnace, was startled at what he saw, and rose up in haste.

"Did we not throw three men bound into the fire?" he demanded of his officers who stood by.

"True, O king," they answered.

"Lo, I see four men, loose, walking in the fire, and they are not hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Then Nebuchadnezzar went as near the mouth of the seething furnace as he dared.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he called, "servants of the Most High God, come out!"

Then the three men walked out of the fire.

The princes, governors, captains, and king's officers who were gathered there saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power; nor was the hair of their heads singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed upon them.

No man uttered a word; they waited for the king to speak.

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he exclaimed at last, "who has sent his angel, and delivered his

servants who trusted in him, and who have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

"Therefore, I make a decree, that all who speak evil against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap, because there is no other god who is able to deliver after this sort."

So the king promoted my three friends in the province of Babylon.

The Handwriting on the Wall

All during the days of my exile, and I was by this time an old man, I had warned the heathen rulers of Babylon against the worship of idols, and still they would not heed.

One night Belshazzar, who was then king, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords.

While they were drinking, the king ordered his servants to bring from the treasure house of his gods, the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off from the temple at Jerusalem.

When the sacred vessels were brought, the king and his princes and his many wives drank from them; and as they drank they sang the praises of their gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

In the same hour, as they were feasting in the great banquet hall, the fingers of a man's hand appeared in the light of the candlestick and wrote upon the white plaster of the wall; and the king saw the hand as it wrote.

Then the king's face became pale, and his mind full of fear, so that his body trembled, and his knees knocked together.

"Bring in the magicians, and the wise men of Babylon," he cried aloud in his terror.

All the king's wise men came in quickly and stood before him.

"Whoever reads this writing," he said to them, his voice still

shaking, "and tells me its meaning, shall be clothed in purple, and wear a gold chain about his neck, and be the third ruler in my kingdom."

Then the magicians gazed wisely at the writing on the plaster, and solemnly shook their heads. Not one of them could tell what the four words meant.

The king's color came and went; his panic increased, and his guests looked at the wall in fear and astonishment.

Now the queen, who would not be present at such a feast, hearing what was going on, came into the banquet hall.

"O king, live forever," she said; "let not your thoughts trouble you. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, named Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar made him master of the magicians. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show you the meaning."

So I was sent for in haste, and came and stood before the king.

"Are you that Daniel whom my grandfather brought captive from Jerusalem?" the king asked. "I have heard of you, that you can explain hard sentences. Now if you can read this writing and tell me the meaning, you shall be clothed in purple, with a gold chain about your neck, and be made the third ruler in my kingdom."

"Let your gifts be to yourself, and your rewards to another," I answered. "Yet I will read the writing to the king, and tell him the meaning.

"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom, and greatness and glory and majesty; and all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him; and whom he would, he slew; and whom he would, he kept alive; and whom he would, he raised up; and whom he would, he put down.

"But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was removed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him; and he was driven from the sons

of men, and imagined himself a wild beast, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and that he sets up over it whomever he will.

“You, his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, but have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven, and have brought the vessels of his house here, and have drunk wine in them, and have praised the gods of silver, of gold, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified.

“This is the meaning of the writing on the wall: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN’: God has numbered your kingdom, and brought it to an end. You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Then Belshazzar ordered me to be clothed in purple, with a gold chain about my neck, and to be proclaimed third ruler in the kingdom.

But even while Belshazzar was speaking, his enemies were stealing into the city; and that very night they broke into his palace and killed him; and Da-ri-us the Mede took the kingdom.

Daniel in the Den of Lions

King Darius had not long been on the throne before my enemies laid a trap for me; but they were caught in it themselves, as you shall hear.

It pleased Darius to set over the whole kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, who were to have charge of the king's business.

Over the princes he set three presidents, of whom I was the first. So I was made the first ruler of the kingdom next to the king himself.

These proud nobles and princes were filled with envy, and

set spies to watch me, but they could find no fault or error, because I was faithful in all that I did.

Then my secret enemies put their heads together and said, "We shall not find any accusation against this Daniel in his office; let us attack him concerning the law of his God."

So they laid a trap for me, and planned to get the help of the king.

"King Darius, live forever," they said, coming to him. "All the nobles and princes of the kingdom desire to make a law that whoever shall pray to any god or man for thirty days, save to you, O king, shall be thrown into the den of lions. Now, O king, make a law, and sign the writing that it be not changed, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians which alter not."

This pleased the king's vanity, so he made the law and signed the writing.

Then the plotters watched to see what I would do.

When I knew the writing was signed, I did just what they expected. Three times a day I went into my house, and opened the windows of my bedroom toward Jerusalem, kneeled down, and prayed, and gave thanks, as I had always done. One time as I rose from my knees, I saw them watching.

"Ha! ha! Now we have him," the plotters laughed; and in the morning they went to report to the king.

"Did you not sign a writing that every man who should pray to any God or man within thirty days, save to you, O king, should be thrown into the den of lions?" they asked.

"The thing is true, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians which alter not," answered the king.

"This Daniel, who is one of the captive Jews, pays no regard to the law which you have signed, O king," they said; "but openly worships his God three times a day."

Then the king was very angry with himself, and set his heart on delivering me. All that day he tried to find some way to save me, but could not.



VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING THE KING AROSE, AND CAME IN HASTE TO THE DEN OF
LIONS
(237)

That evening the plotters went to the king again.

"Know, O king," they said, "the law is, that no law of the Medes and Persians, once made, may be changed."

Then the king could put it off no longer; he ordered that I be cast into the den of lions.

"It may be that your God, whom you serve continually, will deliver you," he said to me.

As we approached the den, which was underground, the snarling beasts could be heard below.

Quickly the soldiers threw me in, and laid a stone upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it, so that it could not be opened without his permission.

Then the king went to his palace, and sent away his musicians, and refused to eat. All night long he tossed on his bed and could not sleep.

Meanwhile, my enemies were having a merry time celebrating their victory.

Very early in the morning the king arose, and came in haste to the den of lions, and ordered the guards to remove the stone.

"Daniel, O Daniel," he cried, "servant of the living God, is your God whom you serve continually, able to deliver you from the lions?"

"O king, live forever," I answered. "My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; for I was innocent before him, and before you, O king, I have done no wrong."

The king was exceedingly glad, and commanded me to be lifted out of the den at once; and no manner of hurt was found upon me. Then he ordered the men who had accused me to be brought.

"You laid a snare for my servant, Daniel, and have been caught in it yourselves," he said. "What have you to say?"

They could say nothing, save to beg for mercy. But there was little mercy in those days.

"Away with them to the lions!" commanded the king.

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in the earth:

"Peace be to you. I make a decree, that in all my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever. He delivers and rescues, and works signs and wonders in heaven and in earth; who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

So I prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

* * * * *

Both children drew a long breath as Daniel finished telling of his rescue from the lions' den. Their aunt's entrance into the room roused them from their thoughts.

"Oh, Aunty," the little girl exclaimed, "wasn't it wonderful that God saved Daniel from the lions!"

"It was indeed," said her aunt. "You must know, by this time, what Daniel's faith meant to the Jews in that land of idols, and how it helped them keep true to their God. Of course, in their hearts there was always the hope of going back to their own beloved city of Jerusalem; and many of them did go back. Ne-hem-i-ah, the patriot, tells about his return; I know that you will like to read about what he accomplished while he was there."

When Billy looked in Uncle Ben's book, he saw that Nehemiah told his own story.



OTHERS SET THE GREAT STONES AND REPAIRED THE BROKEN WALLS

XXI

NEHEMIAH, THE PATRIOT

The King's Cupbearer

LIKE Daniel, I was a Jewish captive, far from home and country in the land of Babylon. I lived in the winter palace of King Ar-ta-xer-xes at Shu-shan, for I was the king's cupbearer.

One day my brother, and some friends who had just returned from Jerusalem, came to see me. I asked eagerly after the captives who had been allowed to return some years before.

"Our people are in great distress; their name is a byword; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire," my brother told me.

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and prayed for my country.

"O Lord, the God of heaven," I cried, confessing the sins of my people, "prosper your servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of the king."

Now I knew what I would do, for God put it into my heart.

One day I stood alone before the king to serve him; and as I gave him the cup, he saw the grief written on my face.

"Why is your face sad?" he asked, kindly. "You are not sick; this is nothing but sorrow of heart."

My chance had come, but I was so afraid I could scarcely speak.

"Let the king live forever," I answered at last. "Why should not my face be sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies waste, and her gates are burned with fire?"

"For what do you make request?" asked the king.

"If it please the king," I replied, "send me to Jerusalem, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may build it up again."

The king said to me, and the queen also was sitting by him, "How long will the journey be? And when will you return?"

So it pleased the king to send me, and I set a time for my return.

"If it please the king," I requested further, "let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river that they let me pass through to Judah; and a letter to the keeper of the king's forests that he give me timber for the gates and wall of the city."

All of these requests the king granted, for the good hand of my God was upon me. He also gave me a guard of officers and horsemen from his army; and when I came to the governors beyond the river, I gave them the king's letters, and they let us pass.

I had scarcely arrived at Jerusalem before I heard that Sanbal-lat of Samaria, and To-bi-ah, his servant, were exceedingly grieved at the news that a man had come from Persia to seek the welfare of the people they despised.

He Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem

After coming to Jerusalem, I looked about for three days, but told no man what God had put into my heart to do for the city.

The third night I rose up, took a horse and rode out quietly with a small guard through the valley gate. Slowly I rode in the moonlight around the city and saw the broken walls, and burned gates, where the enemies of my people might enter at will.

None of the rulers of the city knew where I went, or what I did, until I called them together the next day.

"You see what distress we are in," I said. "Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that our name be no longer a byword."

Then I told them what God had put into my heart, and also the king's words, and showed them his letters.

"Let us rise up and build!" they all cried when they saw what I had come to do.

When Sanballat and Tobiah, and other haters of the city, heard it, they laughed us to scorn.

"What is this thing that you do?" they cried. "Will you rebel against the king?"

"The God of heaven will prosper us," I replied; "therefore, we his servants will rise up and build."

The people were divided into companies, and I gave each company a part of the work to do; to some, the gates—the sheep gate, the fish gate, the valley gate, the water gate, the horse gate; to others, the towers, and the walls between. Some brought great beams from the king's forests, others cleared away the rubbish, and others set the great stones and repaired the broken walls; and all classes, the priests, the merchants, the goldsmiths, the servants, labored at the walls with their own hands.

But when Sanballat heard that the walls were going up, he scoffed at the Jews, and stirred up the army of Samaria.

"What are these feeble Jews doing?" he mocked. "Will

they fortify themselves? Will they make an end in a day? Will they dig the stones out of the rubbish heaps?"

"Even a fox might break down their stone wall, if he were to run up against it," Tobiah cried, who was with him.

But we kept on building the wall, until it was built all around the city to half its height; for the people had a mind to work.

When Sanballat and Tobiah saw the speed with which the wall was rising, they became very angry, and gathered the hostile bands which had been wont to raid the city to make an attack on us, and destroy our work. But we made our prayer to God, and set a watch against them day and night.

"Be not afraid of them," I said to the people; "remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

From that time we were armed and ready, and every one of the builders had his sword girded by his side, and so builded; and the trumpeter was by me.

"The work is great and large, and we are separated on the wall; whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, run to that place, and our God shall fight for us," was my order.

So we wrought in the work from the rising of the sun till the stars appeared, and when Sanballat saw that we were armed and ready for battle, he was afraid to attack.

But he tried in every way to do us mischief, even plotting to kill me; and my people begged me to shut myself in the temple at night lest I be killed.

"Should such a man as I hide myself?" I replied. "I will not."

But nothing our enemies could do put us in fear, or hindered the work. The wall was finished in fifty-two days, and the gates were set in place, and Jerusalem was secure from attack. When our enemies heard of it, they were filled with fear, for they saw that this work was wrought of God. After putting all things in order, I returned to report to the king.

* * * * *

"That was a short story," said Billy, regretfully, as he closed the book. "What a brave man Nehemiah was, and how he loved his country. How glad he must have been when the wall was built. I wish I could have talked about it with him."

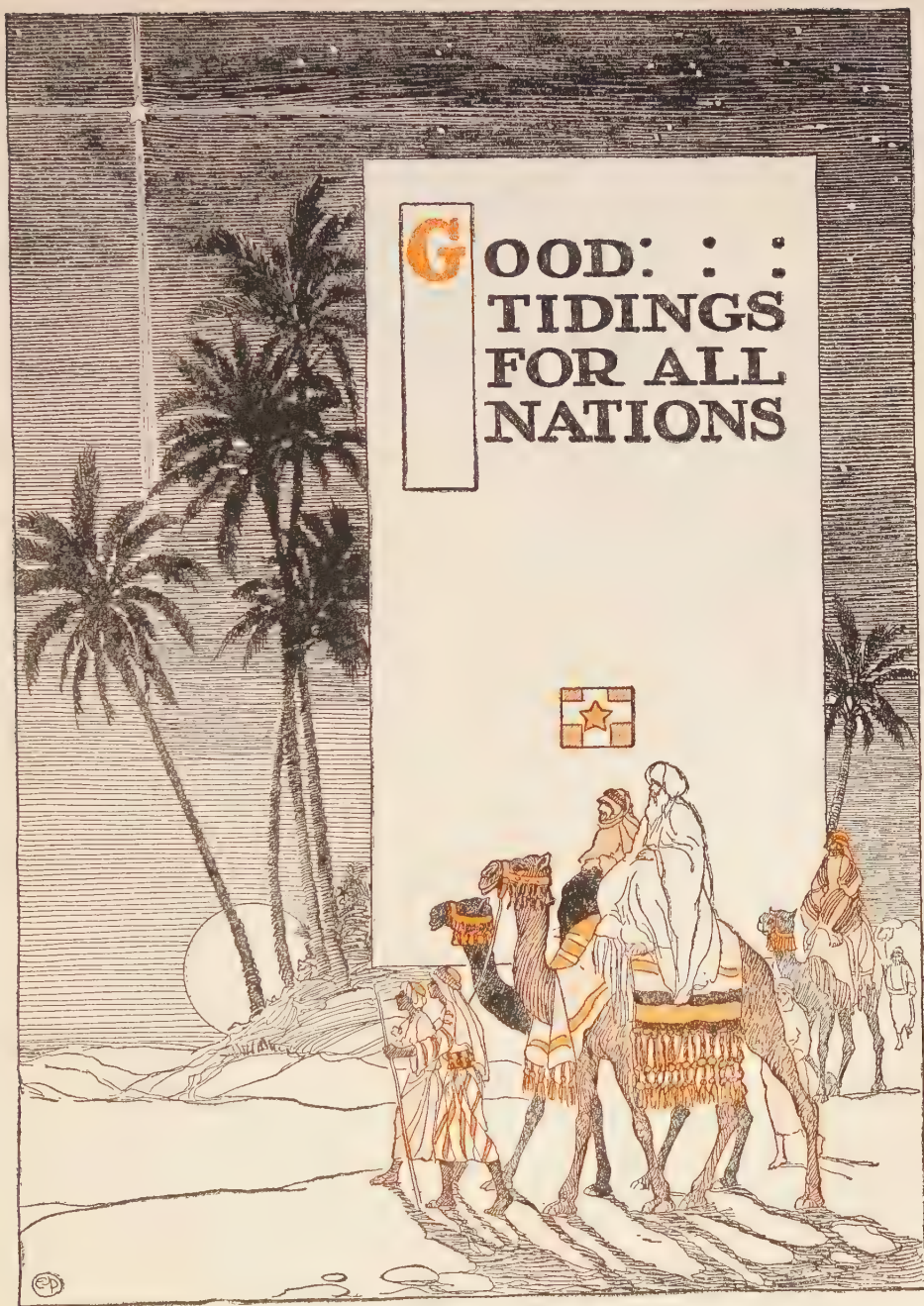
"Yes, he was a brave man," said Aunt Maria; "you may read more about him in the Book of Nehemiah."

Then she added, "We are now at the end of the Old Testament stories. Besides the hope of returning to their own country, the Jews always held in their hearts the promise that God would send them a great deliverer. A little after the time of Nehemiah came Malachi, the last of the Old Testament writers; but four hundred years were to pass before the birth of Jesus, about whom we are going to read in the New Testament."

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."—MALACHI 3:1.

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OOD: : :
TIDINGS
FOR ALL
NATIONS



GOOD TIDINGS FOR ALL NATIONS

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—JOHN 3:16.



THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, "BE NOT AFRAID; BEHOLD, I BRING YOU TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE".

XXII

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF JESUS

THE long weeks of winter were passing rapidly with the story-telling; Christmas had come and gone; the children were eager to finish the Bible stories before their parents' return; and Aunt Maria brushed aside rather sadly thoughts of the days when she would once more be left alone in the big old country house.

"We are now ready to talk about the Story of Jesus, which is the most interesting part of the Bible," she said, as all three were seated cosily in the living room one evening. "All the Old Testament stories point forward to the coming of Jesus, and prepare the way for his great work.

"Almost all that we know about his life is told in the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These four writers each wrote a separate story of Jesus, and together they give us the complete story as far as it is recorded.

"You can see what a wonderful person Jesus was by the fact that his birth marks the beginning of a new day. Our calendar is dated from the birth of Jesus. We call his birthday Christmas Day."

Without waiting for questions, the old lady opened her Bible and began to tell about the birth of Jesus.

* * * * *

Jesus is Born

In the days of Her-od, the king of Ju-de-a, there went out a decree from Cæ-sar Au-gus-tus that all the world should be enrolled. We would say to-day that a census was to be taken.

The people were not allowed to enroll their names where they happened to live; everyone had to return to the place where his family belonged.

Now Jo-seph, the husband of Mary, belonged to the family of David, of Beth-le-hem in Judea, although he lived at Naz-a-reth in Gal-i-lee.

For this reason Joseph and Mary had to travel about seventy miles to Bethlehem to enroll their names. That was a great hardship in those days. When they arrived, they had no place to go; the town was crowded with people who had come on the same errand, and there was no room in the inn.

So they found a lodging place in a stable; and there Mary's baby was born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

His parents named him according to the words of the angel who had foretold his coming:

"Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins."

The Angels and the Shepherds

Just as it was getting daylight a strange thing happened. Joseph was sitting quietly beside Mary where she lay watching her baby, when they heard a noise at the stable door, and a crowd

of rough shepherds came rushing in, all talking at once of a wonder they had seen.

They said that they were out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks that night, when an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were so frightened that they fell on their faces.

The angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord; and this shall be a sign to you; you shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

Suddenly there was with the angel a great company of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace,
Good will toward men."

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us go into Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they had come in haste to see the babe.

Mary and Joseph looked at each other as they listened, and wondered at the things that were told by the shepherds.

Then the shepherds went away, glorifying and praising God for all things that they had heard and seen. But Mary kept all these sayings in her heart.

Wise Men from the East Visit Him

Several weeks after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Wise Men from the East came to Jerusalem.

"Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" the Wise Men inquired. "For we saw his star in the East, and are come to worship him."

When Herod the king heard of this he was troubled, and all

Jerusalem with him. Gathering together the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born.

"In Bethlehem of Judea," they answered.

Herod secretly called the Wise Men, and learned of them exactly what time the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem.

"Go and search carefully for the young child," he said; "and when you have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him."

When they had talked with the king, they went their way, and lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they came into the house, and saw the child in his mother's arms, they fell down and worshiped him; and opening their treasures, they presented to him gifts of great value, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

They were warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod and report, and so they departed into their own country another way.

The Flight Into Egypt

The night after the visit of the Wise Men, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying:

"Arise, take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

That very night Joseph and Mary set out in the darkness; and after a weary journey escaped safely into Egypt.

Herod Attempts to Kill Him

When Herod saw that the Wise Men did not return and report to him where the child was, he was terribly angry. He did not

want to worship the child, as he had falsely told the Wise Men; he wanted to kill him; and now he did not know which child it was.

In his rage, he sent soldiers to kill all the male children in Bethlehem and its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise Men.

Herod never knew that the child whose life he sought had escaped, and was safe with his mother in Egypt.

The Return to Nazareth

After the family had been in Egypt a few months, the cruel King Herod died. Then the angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph, saying:

“Rise up, take the young child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the young child’s life.”

So he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

On their return, they heard that the son of Herod ruled in Judea, and were afraid to remain there. Joseph was again warned of God in a dream, and took his family north into Galilee, and came and dwelt in Nazareth, his former home.

So the child grew, and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

A Boyhood Visit to Jerusalem

Now Joseph and Mary went every year to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover. When Jesus was twelve years old they went up to the feast, as was their custom, and Jesus went with them.

When the family had stayed the usual time, they set out on their return in the company of their friends and neighbors; but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

Supposing him to be in the company, his parents went a day’s journey without missing him.

When evening came they searched among their relatives and friends, but could not find him, and no one knew where he was.

Full of fears that he had been lost, Joseph and Mary hastened back to Jerusalem seeking him.

On the third day they found him in the temple. There he was sitting, surrounded by teachers and doctors of the law, both listening to them and asking them questions; and all that heard him speak were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him they were astonished. As soon as he saw them, he hastened to them through the crowd.

"Son, why have you treated us in this way? Behold, your father and I have searched for you sorrowing," his mother gently reproved him.

"How is it that you searched for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" he asked, in surprise.

His mother did not understand at that time what he meant, although she was to know afterwards.

So Jesus went home to Nazareth with his parents, and was obedient to them. But Mary kept all these sayings of his in her heart, wondering what they might mean.

So Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and grew in favor with God and man, until the time arrived for him to begin his great work.

* * * * *

"Of course, dear children," added Aunt Maria, "you will remember, as I told you when we began, the most complete account of the life of Jesus is that written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which you will read as long as you live.

"Your Uncle Ben also wrote in his book the story of what happened to Jesus after he grew to manhood; you will find it there, just as he loved to tell it. I want you to read that next, and we will talk about it from time to time."



"REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND!"

XXIII

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE next Sunday afternoon the heaviest snow of the winter set in. Mary Frances and her brother sat in a quiet corner of the room, and opened the old leather-bound volume that had come to mean so much to them. As they began to read, it seemed as if Uncle Ben himself were talking to them; then they forgot the storm and everything else, as they became lost in the wonderful story.

* * * * *

The Voice in the Wilderness

John the Baptist was the son of Mary's cousin Elisabeth. He was a few months older than Jesus, and came to prepare the way for him. For thirty years he had lived in the desert, far from cities and men, while God was fitting him for the great work he had to do.

When he began to preach, this was his strange message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

John did not look like other preachers. He wore a long tunic made of camel's hair; he had a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Very soon the people heard of this strange preacher, and came to hear him from Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the country round about. John baptized them in the river Jordan, after they had repented and confessed their sins. So they called him John the Baptist.

As the people were wondering whether he were the promised Christ, the Messiah, John answered them all and told them that he was not; that he had come only to prepare the way for him.

John Baptizes Jesus

All the while that John had been living in the desert, Jesus had lived in Gal-i-lee. He was now about thirty years of age, and a few months younger than John.

In those days, when all the people were being baptized, Jesus came from Nazareth to the river Jordan to be baptized by John.

"I have need to be baptized by you, why do you come to me?" John asked.

But because Jesus wished it, John baptized him. Then the heavens were opened, and Jesus saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and a voice from heaven said:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

One day the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you? Are you the Christ?"

"I am not the Christ," he confessed. "I am the voice of one crying in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

Jesus Gains His First Disciples

The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, and cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" he repeated reverently, as Jesus passed.

Two of his disciples, who were standing with him, heard his words and followed Jesus. One of them was named Andrew, and the other, John. Presently Jesus turned and saw the two young men.

"What are you seeking?" His low voice sounded like music in their ears.

"Teacher, where do you lodge?" one asked.

"Come and see," he replied.

They went with him gladly, and saw where he dwelt, and stayed with him the rest of that day.

The next day Andrew found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." "Messiah" was the Jewish name for Christ, the deliverer for whom they had looked so long.

When Jesus saw Andrew's brother, he said to him, "You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas." From that time Simon was called Peter, which is another word for Cephas, and means a rock.

The following day, as Jesus was walking along the road, he met a man named Philip, and said to him, "Follow me."

Philip consented joyously, and then hurried off to find his friend, Nathanael, and told him the good news.

"We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law and the prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," he said. "Come and see him."

Nathanael went with him and talked with Jesus, and he, too, became his follower. With these five disciples Jesus began his work.

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"FILL THE WATER JARS WITH WATER".

XXIV

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

His First Miracle

THERE was a wedding in the town of Ca-na in Galilee to which Jesus and his disciples were invited, and the mother of Jesus was there.

During the feast the wine failed, and his mother said to him, "They have no wine."

"Yes, I know, but my time has not come yet," Jesus replied. He had so far never done any of the wonderful deeds for which he was afterwards famous.

But his mother said to the servants, "Whatever he says to you, do it."

Now six water jars were standing there, each holding several gallons of water.

Presently Jesus turned to the servants and said, "Fill the water jars with water."

They filled them up to the brim.

"Now draw out some, and carry it to the ruler of the feast," he directed them.

When the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, he wondered where it came from; for only the servants who drew the water knew what had been done.

"Most people serve the good wine first, and then the poorer, but you have kept the good wine until now," he told the bridegroom.

This was the first of many miracles which Jesus did; and his disciples believed in him.

He Drives the Traders Out of the Temple

When the feast of the passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and his disciples went with him.

He entered the temple and found men selling oxen and sheep and doves for the sacrifices. Near by at their tables sat the men who changed into Jewish money the coins brought by the worshippers. Only Jewish money could be offered in the temple.

When Jesus saw them, he made a whip of cords and drove out the men and the sheep and the oxen. He poured out the changers' money, and overturned the tables, so that the coins rolled on the floor.

"Take these doves away! You must not make my Father's house a market for buying and selling," he said to the men who were selling doves.

The Jews were not at all pleased at this. They did not know what to make of this new teacher.

"What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?" they asked him.

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,"

Jesus answered; meaning, "Destroy my body and in three days I will raise it up."

"Forty-six years was this temple in building," the Jews replied. "Will you raise it up in three days?"

No one knew what he meant at the time; but afterwards, when he was raised from the dead in three days, his disciples remembered this, and believed the Scriptures, and the words which Jesus had said.

He Heals a Nobleman's Son

When Jesus returned to Galilee, the Galilæans welcomed him, for they had seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast. His fame went through all the country round about, and he taught in the synagogues, or Jewish churches.

When he came again to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine, a nobleman, whose son was sick at Ca-per-na-um, came to him, and begged him that he would come and heal his son, who was at the point of death.

"Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe," Jesus said to him.

"Sir," the nobleman cried, "come down ere my child die."

"Go your way; your son lives," Jesus told him.

The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. As he was going down, his servants met him, saying that his son lived. So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better.

"Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him," they replied.

Then the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed, and his whole house.

He Is Driven Out of Nazareth

After these events, Jesus went on a preaching tour through Galilee, and at last came to his home in Nazareth.

When the Sabbath Day came, Jesus went to the synagogue, as his custom was, and stood up to read the lesson. A great crowd had gathered out of curiosity to see what he would do, for his fame had reached his own town.

The attendant handed him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.”

When he had finished reading, he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down to speak.

The eyes of all the people were fastened on him. Then he began to say to them:

“To-day this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears.”

As they listened, they all wondered at the words of grace that fell from his lips.

Then some began to murmur, “Is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter?”

Jesus read their minds, and said: “No doubt you will say to me, ‘Doctor, heal yourself. Do in your own country the wonders we have heard of your doing in other places.’ But truly, I say to you, no prophet is honored in his own country. In the days of the great famine they would not believe in Elijah, and he was sent to a poor widow in the strange land of Sidon; and in the days of Elisha, there were many lepers in Israel, but he was sent to cure Naaman who was not an Israelite, but a Syrian.”

When they heard those things they were so angry that they broke up the service. Then they drove him from the synagogue, and rushed him out of the town to the brow of a steep hill on which the town was built, in order that they might hurl him down headlong.

In their rage they would have killed him, but his time to die had not yet come, so he slipped through their hands and escaped.

After that, Jesus never lived in Nazareth again, and he had no home except such as his friends gave him.

He Calls Four Disciples

One day as Jesus was standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the people pressed about him; some to hear the word of God, others hoping to see him perform a miracle; and two boats were lying there.

When the crowd became too great, he stepped into one of the boats which belonged to Peter and Andrew, and asked them to put out a little from the land. Sitting in the boat, he spoke to the crowd on the shore.

After a while he left off speaking, and turning to Peter, said, "Put out into deep water, and let down your nets."

"Master, we fished all night, and caught nothing; but at your word I will let down the nets," Peter answered.

When Peter and Andrew did this, they caught so many fishes that their nets were breaking. They called to James and John in the other boat to come and help them; and the four men filled both boats with the fishes, which were so heavy that the boats began to sink.

When he saw it, Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, crying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

He was amazed at the number of fishes; and so also were James and John, who were partners with Peter and Andrew.

Jesus said to Peter, "Do not fear; follow me, and you shall catch men."

When the men had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him.

He Drives Out a Demon

After Jesus escaped from his enemies at Nazareth, he came to Capernaum, a fishing town by the Sea of Galilee.

On the Sabbath Day he entered the synagogue, and taught the people, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his words were spoken with authority.

In the synagogue there was a man possessed with the spirit



SITTING IN THE BOAT, HE SPOKE TO THE CROWD ON THE SHORE
(261)

of an unclean demon. "Let us alone!" he cried out with a loud voice. "What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Are you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!"

All sat silent, to see what Jesus would do. "Hold your peace and come out of him!" he said, rebuking the evil spirit.

When the demon had thrown the man down before them all, he came out of him, having done him no hurt.

The people were astonished. "How is this? With authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" they said one to another.

Jesus left the synagogue and went to the house of Simon Peter. There he found Peter's wife's mother ill with a great fever. Her friends begged him to heal her; so he rebuked the fever, and it left her. She rose up immediately and waited on them.

Now when the sun was setting, all the sick and all those that had different diseases were brought to him by their friends, and a great crowd of people gathered about the door. Jesus laid his hands on them and healed them; and the evil spirits came out of those that were possessed, crying, "You are the Son of God."

This he did far into the night, and early in the morning he left the house and went into a desert place, and the people came after him and begged him not to go away.

"I must preach the good tidings to other cities also; for therefore am I sent," was his reply.

So Jesus went throughout all Galilee, preaching the good tidings, and healing the sick.

The First Leper Healed

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a leper came to him, and fell on his knees before him. "Lord, if you will," he said, "you can make me clean."

Being moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper.

"I will," he said; "be made clean."

At once the leprosy left him and he was made clean.

"See that you say nothing to any man; but go show yourself to the priest," Jesus ordered him strictly.

But the healed man went out, and began to tell about it, and spread abroad the news of his healing, so that great crowds came to Jesus from all directions to hear him speak, and to be healed of their diseases. Very often during those tiring days Jesus withdrew alone to quiet places to pray.

A Sick Man Let Down Through a Roof

After some days Jesus returned to Capernaum, and it was noised about that he was teaching in a certain house. There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who had come from all parts of Galilee and Judea, and even from Jerusalem; and so many people were gathered together that there was no room for them inside the house, or even about the door.

Four men came carrying a bed on which lay a man sick of the palsy. They tried to bring him in, but the crowd was so great that they could not get near Jesus to lay the sick man before him.

So they carried him up to the top of the house and took up some of the tiles in the roof. When they had made a large enough hole, they slowly and carefully lowered the bed, with the sick man on it, until it rested at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus saw the great faith that they had in him. He paused in what he was saying, and looked down at the man on the bed.

"Son," he said, gently, "your sins are forgiven you."

But certain of the doctors of the law and scribes sitting there questioned in their hearts.

"Why does this man speak thus? He blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but God?" they thought.

At once Jesus knew what they were thinking.

"Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the sick, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to

say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins,"—he turned to the sick man and said—"I say to you, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' "

The sick man, a moment before helpless on his bed, instantly arose, and picked up his bed, and walked out before them all, praising God. Those who saw it were amazed, and filled with fear; and they, too, glorified God.

"We never saw anything like this!" they said. "We have seen strange things to-day!"

The Man with the Withered Hand

On a certain Sabbath Day, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught; and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

The scribes and the Pharisees watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath Day, that they might accuse him of breaking the Sabbath.

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Stand up and come forward."

When the man stood before them all, Jesus put a question to them.

"I will ask you one thing," he said; "is it right on the Sabbath Day to do good, or to do evil; to save life, or to destroy it?"

He looked round upon them, and without waiting for a reply, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

The man did so, and his hand was healed at once.

But the Pharisees were filled with rage, and they went out and plotted how they might destroy Jesus.

A Helpless Man Cured

About this time there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there was at Jerusalem, by the sheep gate, a pool of water called Be-thes-da, and there were five porches around it.

In these porches about the pool were a great many sick people; the blind, the lame, and people with withered limbs, waiting for the stirring of the water.

From time to time the water was stirred, and whoever first stepped in after the troubling of the water was cured of whatever disease he had.

So the sick waited there, eagerly watching the water, hoping to be cured.

One man who was waiting there had been ill of his disease for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying on his mat, and knew that he had been ill all that time, he was moved with pity, and said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

"Sir, I have no man to help me into the pool when the water is troubled, and some one else steps in before me," the sick man answered.

"Rise, take up your bed and walk," Jesus said to him.

Instantly the man was made well, and took up his bed, and walked.

Now this was done on the Sabbath Day. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the Sabbath Day; it is not right for you to carry your bed."

"He that made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk,' " the man replied.

"What man is it who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" they asked him.

But the man who was cured did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away because of the great crowd.

Afterwards Jesus found the cured man in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are now well; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him.

For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, seeking to kill him, because he did these things on the Sabbath Day.

When they asked Jesus why he did them, he replied, "My Father works even until now, and I work."

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, not only because he did these things on the Sabbath; but also called God his own Father, thereby making himself equal with God.

"If you believed Moses," Jesus told them, "you would believe me, for Moses wrote of me. But if you do not believe the writings of Moses, how shall you believe my words?"

So they tried to kill the Man who had come to save them.



JESUS AROSE AND REBUKED THE WIND, AND SAID TO THE SEA: "PEACE, BE STILL"

XXV

WONDERFUL WORDS AND WORKS OF JESUS

The Twelve Apostles

IN those days Jesus went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. When the morning came, he called his disciples to him, who were now a great number, and chose twelve from among them who were to be with him. These are known as the twelve apostles. Their names are:

Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother, Andrew; James the son of Zeb-e-dee, and his brother, John; Philip and Bar-thol-o-mew; Thomas and Matthew; James the son of Al-phæ-us, and Thad-dæ-us; Simon the Zeal-ot, and Judas Is-car-i-ot, who became a traitor.

The Sermon on the Mount

After Jesus had chosen the Twelve he began to teach them. The crowds still pressed upon him, so he withdrew to a hillside and sat down with his disciples gathered about him.

Here are some of his wonderful sayings:

THOSE WHO ARE BLESSED

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

HOW TO PRAY

But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not, therefore, like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him.

After this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth,

As it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil;

For thine is the kingdom,

And the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

THREE THINGS TO DO

ASK, and it shall be given you;
SEEK, and you shall find;
KNOCK, and it shall be opened unto you;
For everyone that asks receives;
And he that seeks finds;
And to him that knocks it shall be opened.

HEARING AND DOING

Whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

And everyone that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

When Jesus ended his sayings, the people were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

An Army Officer's Servant

After Jesus had ended the sayings about which Matthew has told, he went to Capernaum.

A Roman army officer who was stationed there had a servant who was very dear to him. Now this servant was so sick that he lay at the point of death.

When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some of his Jewish friends to him, asking that he would come and heal the servant.

"This officer is worthy that you should do this for him," they said; "for he loves our nation, and himself built us our synagogue."

Jesus went with them; and when he was not far from the house, the officer sent messengers to him.

"Lord, do not trouble yourself," ran the message, "for I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. Neither did I think myself worthy to come to you; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man having authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, he wondered at him, and turned and said to the crowd that followed him, "I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

And when the messengers returned to the house, they found that the servant who had been sick was well.

Jesus Brings the Dead to Life

One day Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples went with him, and a great many people.

Now when he drew near to the gate of the town, there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and many people of the town were with her.

When Jesus saw her, his heart was moved with pity, and he said to her, "Do not weep."

Then he stepped forward and touched the bier on which the body lay; and the bearers stood still.

"Young man, I say to you, Arise!" Jesus said.

The young man who was dead sat up, and began to speak; and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Fear took hold on all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet is risen up among us, and God has visited his people."

The fame of Jesus spread through all Judea, and the country round about.

Jesus Stills the Storm

A strange and wonderful thing happened one day after Jesus had been teaching beside the sea. When evening came, and the crowds who had been listening still lingered, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake."

The disciples sent away the people and took Jesus with them into the ship. There were also other little ships with them.

So they set out. As they went a great storm of wind arose, and the waves dashed over the ship, so that it began to fill with water.

Jesus himself was in the stern of the ship, all tired out, asleep upon a pillow. As the storm increased the disciples awoke him, crying out, "Master, do you not care if we perish?" Jesus arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea:

"Peace, be still."

At his word, the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"Why are you fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" he asked his disciples.

But they were still afraid, and marvelled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the sea, and they obey him?"

The Ruler's Daughter Healed

When Jesus returned across the lake, a great crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting on the shore. Among them was a ruler of the synagogue, Ja-i-rus by name, who fell at his feet, saying:

"My little daughter is dying; I pray you, come and lay your hands on her, that she may be made well, and live."

So Jesus went with him, and the people followed, pressing about them.

While they were on the way, a messenger came from the ruler's house. "Your daughter is dead," the messenger told him. "Why trouble the Master any further?"



LITTLE GIRL, I SAY TO YOU, RISE UP
(272)

As soon as Jesus heard this, he said to the ruler, "Do not be afraid, only believe; and she shall be made well."

When he came to the ruler's house, he would permit no one to go in with him except Peter, and the two brothers, James and John.

When they entered, the house was full of people, making a great noise with their mourning and weeping.

"Why do you make this noise, and weep?" he asked. "The child is not dead, but sleeping."

They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

But Jesus put them all out and took the father and mother and the three disciples, and went into the room where the little girl lay.

Taking the child by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, rise up."

Instantly her spirit came back, and to her parents' great joy and wonder the child rose up, and began to walk; for she was twelve years old.

Then he charged the parents strictly that no one should know this, and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

But the fame of his deeds spread throughout the land.

Jesus Visits His Home Again

After this, Jesus and his disciples came again to Nazareth where Jesus' family lived.

On the Sabbath Day he went into the synagogue and began to teach, and the people were astonished at his words.

"Where did this man learn these things?" they asked. "What is the wisdom that is given to him that such mighty works are performed by his hands?"

"Is not this the carpenter who worked here so many years? Is not his mother Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And his sisters—do they not all live here with us? Where then did this man learn all these things?"

They could not understand, and so they were offended at him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kinsfolk, and in his own home."

So he could do no mighty works there, because they would not believe in him: except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

Jesus himself marvelled at their unbelief.

How John the Baptist Died

The ruler of the country at this time was Herod the tetrarch, a son of that Herod who had tried to kill Jesus when he was a child, by murdering the little children of Bethlehem.

Like his father he was cruel; among other cruel deeds he put John the Baptist in prison, and afterwards killed him.

He first laid hold of John and bound him in prison because of He-ro-di-as, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married.

John had told him plainly that it was not right for him to marry his brother's wife.

For this reason Herodias hated John, and would have killed him; but she could not, because Herod was afraid of him, and kept him safe, knowing that he was a just and holy man.

But Herodias was determined that John should die, so she waited for a convenient time.

When Herod's birthday came, he made a great supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee.

While the supper was on, the daughter of Herodias came in and danced before Herod. Herod and his guests were so pleased that the king said to the girl, "Ask of me whatever you will, and I will give it you." And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask, I will give it you, even to the half of my kingdom."

The girl went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?"

"The head of John the Baptist," her mother replied.

The daughter hurried back to the king, and said, "I ask that you give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

At this, Herod was exceedingly sorry; yet for the sake of his oath, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not refuse her request.

Immediately the king sent one of his guards, and commanded that John's head be brought; and the soldier went and beheaded John in prison; and brought in his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl, and the girl took it and gave it to her mother.

When John's disciples heard of it they came and took up his body, and laid it in a tomb, and went and told Jesus.



AND BEHOLD, MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEARED BEFORE THEM, AND THEY TALKED WITH JESUS

XXVI

GREAT CROWDS FOLLOW JESUS

Five Thousand People Fed

WHEN Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he went away with his disciples in a boat to a desert place on the other side of the lake.

He wanted to be alone and rest a while, for there were so many people coming and going that he had no leisure, even so much as to eat.

But the people saw him going, and ran around the lake on foot, and when he arrived at the desert place, there was a great crowd waiting for him.

Jesus welcomed them, his heart filled with pity, because they were as sheep without a shepherd, and he spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and healed all that had need of healing.

The sun went down, and evening fell, and the disciples said

to him: "This is a desert place, and the day is far gone. Send the people away, that they may go into the villages and buy food."

"They need not go away," Jesus answered. "Give them something to eat yourselves."

Andrew, Peter's brother, spoke up, and said: "There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes. But what are they among so many?"

"Bring them to me," Jesus said.

Then he ordered that all should be seated in groups of fifty, and a hundred, on the green grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, gave thanks, blessed them, broke the loaves in pieces, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave the bread to the people.

They all ate, and had plenty; after they had all eaten, they gathered up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces that remained.

The men who ate numbered about five thousand, besides women and children.

Then Jesus commanded his disciples to go over to the other side of the lake before him, while he sent the people away.

After the people had gone, he went up into a mountain by himself to pray, and when the darkness came, he was there alone.

Jesus Walks on the Water

At his word, the disciples went down to the shore, got into their boat, and began to row across the sea to Capernaum.

It was now dark; the waves were rising because of a great wind that blew, and the boat was in the midst of the sea.

After they had rowed three or four miles, Jesus came to them walking upon the sea.

When they saw him, they were troubled and cried out for fear, saying, "It is a spirit!"

But instantly Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; do not be afraid!"

Peter cried out, "Lord, if it be you, bid me come to you on the water."

"Come," Jesus said.

Peter climbed out of the boat, and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the waves, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Instantly Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When they were come into the boat, the wind ceased, and the disciples worshiped Jesus, saying, "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God."

Peter's Confession

One day, while Jesus was traveling through the villages north of the Sea of Galilee with the Twelve, he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?"

"Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, one of the old prophets risen again," they told him.

"But who do you say that I am?" he asked.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Peter answered.

"Blessed are you, Simon, son of John," Jesus said to him; "for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

Then he told them that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. From that time he began to show them that he must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed; and after three days rise again.

The Transfiguration

About six days after this, Jesus took with him three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray; and they were there alone.

As Jesus prayed, the appearance of his face was altered, so that it shone like the sun, and his garments became white as the light; and behold, Moses and Elijah appeared before them and talked with Jesus about his death which was to take place in Jerusalem.

"Master," Peter exclaimed, scarce knowing what he said, "it is good for us to be here. Let us build three tabernacles: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

While he was speaking a bright cloud overshadowed them; and they heard a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him."

When they heard the voice, they were frightened, and fell on their faces. Then Jesus came and touched them, and said, "Rise up, do not be afraid."

Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only.

As they were coming down the mountain in the morning, Jesus commanded them: "Tell this vision to no one, until the Son of man is risen from the dead."

And they never did.

The Boy with the Dumb Spirit

When they came back to the nine disciples they saw a great crowd of excited people about them.

As Jesus drew near, a man ran to him and knelt before him, crying, "Lord, have mercy on my son; he is my only child. He has a dumb spirit and suffers cruelly; whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth; often he falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to your disciples and they could not cure him."

"O you faithless ones," Jesus said to his disciples, "how long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me."

So they brought the boy to him, and instantly he had a fresh attack and fell to the ground, and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

"How long is it since this came upon him?" Jesus asked his father.

"From a child," he replied; "and often it throws him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

"If I can!" Jesus replied. "All things are possible to him that believes."

Immediately the father cried out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

By this time the crowd came running together, and when Jesus saw them, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again."

After a struggle, the evil spirit came out, but the boy lay as one dead, so that the people standing by said, "He is dead."

But Jesus took the boy by the hand, and raised him up and gave him back to his father, while all the people wondered.

When they were come into the house, the nine asked him privately, "How is it that we could not cast him out?"

"This can only be done by prayer and fasting," was Jesus' reply. "I say to you truly if you have faith as big as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Remove from here to yonder place,' and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you."

The Unmerciful Servant

One day Peter asked Jesus this question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?"

"Say not, 'Until seven times,' but, 'Until seventy times seven,' " he replied, and then told them this story:

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a certain king, who made a reckoning with his servants. One servant was brought before him who owed him ten thousand talents. As this man had nothing

to pay with, the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

"The servant, fell at his feet and begged him, 'O king, have patience with me, and I will pay all my debt.'

"The king was moved with pity, and released him, and forgave him his debt.

"But that servant, as soon as he was forgiven, went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred shillings, and seized him by the throat, and said, 'Pay what you owe me.'

"So his fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Have patience with me and I will pay all my debt.'

"But he refused, and cast him into prison, until he should pay that which was due.

"When his fellow servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly sorry and told the king all about it; who immediately ordered the man to be brought before him.

"'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I forgave you all your debt because you begged me; should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you?'

"The king was very angry, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due.

"So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you do not forgive your brothers from your hearts."



JESUS PUT CLAY ON THE MAN'S EYES, AND SAID TO HIM, "GO, WASH IN THE POOL OF SILOAM"

XXVII

HIS ENEMIES DETERMINE TO KILL JESUS

They Attempt to Stone Him

AFTER this, Jesus remained in Galilee, keeping away from Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

Now the Jewish feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem was near. Jesus' brothers therefore said to him, "Why not go into Judea so that your followers there may see the works that you do? If you do these things, show yourself to the world." For even his brothers did not believe in him.

"I am not ready to go yet," was Jesus' reply; "but you can go. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its deeds are evil. You go to the feast, but I am not going yet."

So he remained in Galilee. Later on, after his brothers had gone up to the feast at Jerusalem, Jesus went up secretly.

The Jews searched for him at the feast, asking, "Where is

he?" The people argued about him a great deal. Some said, "He is a good man." Others said, "No, he leads the people astray." Yet no one defended him openly.

When the feast was half over, Jesus went into the temple and began teaching, and the people wondered at his words.

"How does this man know these things, having never learned?" they asked each other.

"My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me," Jesus replied. "If anyone wishes to do his will, he shall know the teaching, whether it comes from God, or whether I speak of myself. Has not Moses given you the law, and yet you do not keep it, but seek to kill me?"

"You have a demon," the crowd replied. "Who seeks to kill you?"

"I did a good deed, and you are all angry," Jesus answered. "Moses allowed good deeds to be done on the Sabbath; and yet you are angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath Day."

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus was teaching openly, and that many people believed in him, they sent officers to arrest him.

Some in the crowd who heard him said, "This is the Christ." Others said, "Does the Christ then come out of Galilee?"

Some wished to seize him, but no one laid hands on him.

The officers who were sent to arrest him returned to the Pharisees, who asked, "Why did you not bring him?"

"No man ever spoke like this man," the officers answered.

In the morning Jesus came again to the temple, and began to speak to the people.

"I am the light of the world," he said; "he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"You are a Samaritan, and have a demon," said the Jews, interrupting him.

"I have not a demon," he replied; "but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death."

When he tried to explain to them what he meant by this, they grew so angry that they picked up stones to stone him, but he hid himself and slipped out of the temple.

The Man Born Blind

As Jesus was passing along the streets of Jerusalem, he saw a man blind from his birth, who sat and begged.

His disciples asked him, "Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither did this man sin, nor his parents," Jesus answered; "but that the works of God might be shown openly in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day. The night is coming when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had thus spoken, he made clay and put the clay on the man's eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam."

The man did as Jesus told him, and went home seeing.

"How were your eyes opened?" his neighbors asked him.

"The man, called Jesus, made clay and put it on my eyes," he told them, "and said to me, 'Go to Siloam, and wash;' so I went away and washed and I received my sight."

"Where is he?" they asked.

"I do not know," he replied.

So they brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. Now it was the Sabbath Day when Jesus opened the man's eyes. The Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight.

"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed; and I see," the man answered.

The Jews would not believe that he had been born blind,

until they called his parents, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

"We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind," his parents answered; "but how he came to see, or who opened his eyes, we do not know. He is of age, ask him; let him speak for himself."

They said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that any man who confessed Jesus to be the Christ should be put out of the synagogue.

So the Jews called the man the second time, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner."

"Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know; but I do know that once I was blind and now I can see."

"But what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" they asked again.

"I have told you already, and you did not hear," was the man's answer; "why do you wish to hear it again? Will you also be his disciples?"

Then they abused him, and said, "You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do know where he comes from."

"Why, here is a wonder!" the man answered. "You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. Since the world began, it was not heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

"You were altogether born in sins," they cried; "and would you teach us?" Then they drove him out.

When Jesus heard this, he went to find the man.

"Do you believe on the Son of God?" he asked him.

He answered, "Who is he Lord, that I may believe on him?"

"You have seen him, and he is now talking with you," Jesus said.

"Lord, I believe," he cried, and worshiped him.

Another Attempt to Stone Him

It was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem in the winter time, and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch.

The Jews gathered about him and asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

"I told you, and you do not believe," Jesus answered. "The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness of me, but you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, nor shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Then the Jews picked up stones again to stone him, but Jesus stood his ground.

"I have showed you many good works from the Father; for which of those works do you stone me?" he asked.

"For a good work we do not stone you," they said, "but for blasphemy; and because you, a man, make yourself God."

Jesus answered, "If I do good works, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

At this, they tried again to seize him, but he escaped out of their hands, and went away across the river Jordan to the place where John was at first baptizing.

Many people came to him there, and they said, "John indeed did no sign, but all the things that John said of this man were true." And many believed in him.

He Raises Lazarus from the Dead

After these things Laz-a-rus of Beth-a-ny, who was the brother of Martha and Mary, fell ill.

Now, Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus; so the

sisters sent word to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is sick."

When Jesus heard it he said, "This sickness will not end in death; it is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby."

So he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again."

"Teacher," the disciples objected, "the last time you were there the Jews tried to stone you; are you going again?"

"Yes," he said. "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; I go to awake him out of sleep."

"Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover," the disciples replied.

Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he spoke of taking rest in sleep.

So Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, in order that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Then said Thomas to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Jesus, if he is put to death."

When Jesus came near to Bethany, he heard that Lazarus had been in the grave four days already.

Now Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem; and many of the Jews had come from there to comfort the sisters.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary sat still in the house.

"Lord, if you had been here," Martha said sadly, "our brother would not have died. But even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."

"Your brother will rise again," Jesus said to her.

"I know that he will rise again, in the resurrection at the last day," she replied.

Jesus said to her:

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and he who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she said, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, even he who comes into the world."

Then she returned home and said to her sister Mary, secretly, "The Teacher is come, and is calling for you."

As soon as Mary heard that, she rose quickly and ran to him. The Jews who were in the house followed her, thinking she was going to the grave to weep there.

When Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, crying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he was troubled.

"Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Lord, come and see," they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews about him said, "See how he loved him!"

Some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that Lazarus should not die?"

Jesus therefore, still grieving, came to the grave.

Now the tomb was a cave, and a great stone closed the entrance.

"Take away the stone," Jesus ordered.

"But he has been dead four days!" Martha objected.

"Did I not say to you that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?" he asked her.

Then they took away the stone from the cave where the dead man lay.

Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"



SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT; FOR OF SUCH
IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Then the dead man came out, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was wrapped about with a napkin.

"Loose him, and let him go!" Jesus said to them.

Then many of the Jews who came with Mary, and saw what Jesus had done, believed in him. But some of them went their way to Jerusalem and told the Pharisees.

The Plotters in Council

When they heard that Lazarus had been raised from the dead, the chief priests and the Pharisees called a council in Jerusalem.

"What shall we do?" they asked one another. "This man performs many mighty works. If we let him alone, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

From that day on they took counsel together to put Jesus to death. Jesus, therefore, no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went away into the country to the town of Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples. But later on, he started on his last journey to Jerusalem, and many things happened on the way.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

One day, young children were brought to him that he might touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said:

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.

"Truly, I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

Then he took the children up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them.



WHEN JESUS REACHED THE TREE, HE LOOKED UP AND SAW THE TAX COLLECTOR

XXVIII

THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Jesus Foretells His Death

AS they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking in front of his disciples. The disciples were filled with awe, and those who followed them were afraid; for they knew what bitter enemies he must face in that city.

Once more Jesus took the Twelve aside, and began to tell them the things that were about to happen to him.

“See,” he said, “we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered up to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn him to death, and will deliver him up to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and will spit upon him, and will scourge him, and will kill him, and after three days he will rise again.”

But they understood none of these things; they did not know what he meant.

The Blind Beggar of Jericho

As Jesus came near to Jericho with his disciples, followed by a great crowd of people, Bar-ti-mæ-us, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside begging.

Hearing the people go by, he asked what the noise meant, and they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

When he heard this, he began to cry out, "Jesus, son of David, take pity on me."

The people rebuked him and told him to keep still, but he cried out all the more.

Jesus stood still and said, "Call him."

"Be of good cheer, rise up, he calls for you," they told Bartimæus.

The blind man sprang up and hurried to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

"Lord, that I may receive my sight," answered the blind man.

"Go your way; your faith has made you well," Jesus said.

Instantly Bartimæus received his sight, and followed Jesus, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Zacchæus Climbs a Tree to See Jesus

As Jesus was passing through Jericho a man named Zacchæ-us came running after him.

Zacchæus was the chief of the tax collectors, and a rich man. He was curious to see what Jesus looked like, but could not get near him for the crowds, nor could he see over their heads, because he was a little man. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him as he passed along the road.

When Jesus reached the tree, he looked up and saw the tax collector looking down.

"Zacchæus," Jesus called, "make haste, and come down, for to-day I must stay at your house."

So Zacchæus made haste and came down, and joyfully welcomed Jesus to his house.

When the people saw this, they began to murmur, and said, "He has gone to lodge with a man who is a sinner."

When Zacchæus heard it, he stood up and said to the Lord, "See, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything wrongfully from any man, I will pay him back four times as much."

Jesus said to him, "To-day salvation is come to this house, for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Feast at Bethany

Six days before the passover, Jesus reached Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom he had raised from the dead.

They made him a supper there; and Martha served; and Lazarus was one of those who reclined at the table with him.

Mary, who was also present, took a pound of ointment of pure spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the perfume of the ointment.

But Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, who was about to betray him, was provoked, and said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

Other disciples also murmured, "To what purpose is this waste?"

Now Judas said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and carried the money bag and took part of what was put in it.

When Jesus heard what they were saying, he said, "Let her alone, why do you trouble her? She has wrought a good work on me. You have the poor with you always. She has anointed my body beforehand for the burial.

"Truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel shall be preached

throughout the whole world, that which this woman has done shall be told for a memorial of her."

When the common people of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came in great crowds, not to see Jesus only, but to see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

But the chief priests plotted how they might put Lazarus to death as well, because on his account many of the Jews believed in Jesus.



"HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID"

XXIX

LAST DAYS IN JERUSALEM

Palm Sunday

THE time had now come for Jesus to enter Jerusalem. Leaving Bethany, he led the way to the top of the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city.

Calling two of his disciples, he pointed to a village a little distance off, and said: "Go to the village over there. As you enter you will see a colt tied, on which no man has ever ridden. Untie him and bring him here. If anyone asks you, 'Why do you untie him?' you shall say 'Because the Lord has need of him.'"

The disciples went on their errand and found the colt, just as Jesus had said, tied near the door of a house by the roadside.

As they were untying him, the owner asked, "Why are you loosing the colt?"

"The Lord has need of him," they replied; and the owner let him go.

They brought the colt to Jesus, spread a cloak on his back, and Jesus sat upon him.

Then he began to descend the hill toward the city; as he went,

the disciples spread their garments upon the road, and the great company of people that marched with him began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.

When the crowds that had come to Jerusalem to the feast heard that Jesus was coming, they came out to meet him with palm branches in their hands; and others cut branches from the trees and spread them over the stony road.

The crowds that went before, and those that followed, cried:

“Hosanna to the son of David,
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest.”

Some of the Pharisees who were watching, said to him, “Master, rebuke your disciples.”

“I tell you,” he answered, “if they should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

The procession moved slowly up to the walls of the city and Jesus entered through the East Gate, with great crowds of people singing his praises, and hailing him as king, and all the city was stirred.

“Who is this?” they asked; and the multitudes replied, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

When the Pharisees who were watching him saw and heard the crowds, they said to each other, “See, how we amount to nothing; lo, the world is gone after him.”

Meanwhile, Jesus went to the temple; and when he had looked round about on all things, and the eventide was come, he returned to Bethany with the Twelve.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple the Second Time

When they were come to Jerusalem the next day, Jesus entered into the temple, and began to drive out all who sold and bought in the temple; and he upset the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those who sold doves.

"It is written," he said to them, "'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you are making it a den of robbers."

The blind and the lame came to him there, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and heard the children shouting in the temple, 'Hosanna to the son of David,' they were still more angry and asked him, "Do you hear what these are saying?"

"Yes," Jesus replied; "but did you never read, 'Out of the mouths of babes thou hast perfected praise'?"

The chief priests and scribes and principal men of the people sought to destroy him, for they feared him; but they could do nothing because of the great crowds which hung upon his words, astonished at his teaching.

When evening came he went out again to the village of Bethany with the Twelve, and lodged there.

When they reached the temple the next morning, even though it was early, people were waiting for Jesus, and he sat down and began to teach them. Very soon the chief priests and the scribes came and tried to trap him with sharp questions.

"By what right do you do these things? Who gave you this right? Is it lawful for the Jews to pay taxes to the Roman emperor?" were some of their questions.

But Jesus was not to be trapped. He answered them so well that they were not able to reply, and were silenced.

They dared not seize him openly, because they were afraid of the crowd, who believed him to be a prophet. So they went away and plotted how they might take him secretly.

Jesus Tells More About the Future

As Jesus was leaving the temple to get away from the crowds, one of the Twelve said to him, "Teacher, behold these great stones in the temple buildings!"

"You see these great buildings," Jesus replied; "I tell you truly, the days are coming when there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

When they reached the Mount of Olives and sat down where they could see the temple, Peter and James and Andrew and John asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things come to pass?"

Then Jesus began to tell them of many wonderful things that were about to happen. How great wars would be fought, and nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and how those who followed him would be delivered up, and beaten and killed, and hated by all nations for his name's sake; how his gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all nations; how heaven and earth might pass away, but his words would never pass away; and many other things which you will find written in the four Gospels.

The Twelve sat there in wonder and awe, not knowing what to make of it, but his words are still coming true; and what he said about them came true very soon, for most of them were afterwards killed in his service.

Then he told them how people would be judged in his kingdom, and taught them about the greatest thing in the world; which is *love*.

Before the Judgment Seat

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

Before him will be gathered all nations; and he will separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

He will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world:

For I was hungry, and you gave me food;
I was thirsty, and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger, and you lodged me;
I was naked, and you clothed me;
I was sick, and you visited me;
I was in prison, and you came to me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you? or thirsty, and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and lodge you? or naked, and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you?"

Then the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, in so far as you did any of these things to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Then he will also say to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, accursed ones, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

For I was hungry, and you gave me no food;
I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink;
I was a stranger, and you did not lodge me;
I was naked, and you did not clothe me;
I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me."

Then will those on his left also answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?"

Then he will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, in so far as you did it not to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it not to me."

So these shall go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Judas Betrays His Master

When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days comes the passover, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified."

About that time, the chief priests and principal men of the people were assembled in the palace of the high priest, Cai-a-phas, to take council together how they might seize Jesus by craft, and kill him. But they decided not to do it on the feast day, for fear of causing an uproar among the people.

Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve, and he went to the chief priests and captains, seeking how he might betray Jesus to them.

“What will you give me, if I betray him to you?” he asked.

They were glad when they heard what Judas would do, and promised to give him thirty pieces of silver.

From that time on, Judas sought a convenient chance to betray Jesus, in the absence of the crowd; and it came soon.

So Judas sold his Master for thirty silver coins.



"TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS LORD"

XXX

THE FAREWELL SUPPER

Who is Greatest?

IT was on Thursday, the day before the feast of the passover, that the disciples ate their last meal together.

"Where shall we make ready the passover?" they asked Jesus.

"Go into the city," he replied, "and there you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into whatever house he enters, and say to the man who lives there, 'The Teacher asks where the guest chamber is in which he is to eat the passover with his disciples?' He will show you a large upper room; there make ready for us."

So Peter and John went into the city, and found the room, as Jesus had said; and there they prepared the supper.

When the evening was come Jesus reclined at table with the Twelve, and John was beside him.

Before long, an argument arose as to which of them was to be the greatest in his kingdom.

When this had gone far enough, Jesus interrupted them, and explained that his kingdom was not like the kingdoms of this world; that in his kingdom whose who served others best, would be the greatest. And later on, he showed them what he meant.

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

In that hot country, it was the custom on coming into the house from a journey, to remove the sandals and wash the feet with water provided for that purpose. Generally, among the well-to-do, this task was performed by servants.

Presently Jesus rose from the table, and laid aside his robe, and took a long towel, and tied it about himself.

Then he poured water into a bowl, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel.

When he came to Simon Peter, Peter asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

"What I do, you do not understand now; but you will understand later," Jesus answered.

"You shall never wash my feet!" Peter exclaimed.

"If I do not, you have no part with me," Jesus replied.

Then Peter cried out, "Lord, not my feet only; but also my hands and my head."

After Jesus had washed their feet, he put on his robe and sat down again.

"Do you know what I have been doing for you?" he asked. "You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord; nor one who is sent, greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them."

The Traitor

As they were eating, they saw that Jesus was troubled in spirit.

"Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray me," he said.

They looked at one another in distress, not knowing what he meant.

John was reclining against Jesus' breast; Peter beckoned to him and whispered, "Ask him who it is."

John leaned back and asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

"It is the one to whom I shall give this piece of bread when I have dipped it," Jesus replied.

So, dipping the piece of bread in the dish before him, he gave it to Judas Iscariot.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

No one at the table knew for what purpose Jesus said this to him. Some of them thought that as Judas had the money bag, Jesus meant him to buy what was needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor.

So Judas went out immediately after taking the bread; and it was night.

"In Remembrance of Me"

After that, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me."

In like manner he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying:

"All of you drink of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Truly, I say to you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."

Farewell Words

Then Jesus began to say many other things to them, which they never forgot.

"Now is the Son of man glorified," he said, "and God is glorified in him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me, but where I go, you cannot come; so now a new commandment I give to you: that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples—that you love one another."

"Lord, where are you going?" Peter asked.

"Where I go, you cannot follow me now," Jesus replied; "but you shall follow afterwards."

"Lord, why cannot I follow you now?" asked the impulsive Peter. "I will lay down my life for your sake."

"Will you indeed lay down your life for my sake?" asked Jesus. "Truly, I say to you, that even this night, before the cock crows, you will deny three times that you know me."

"Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" Peter declared earnestly.

In like manner so said they all.

Many other things Jesus said:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Many other beautiful and wonderful words Jesus spoke to them that night, which they never forgot, and which John wrote down in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of his Gospel, where all may read.

Then, after Jesus had made a wonderful prayer, asking the Father to bless and keep them, they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Soon they came into the Garden of Geth-sem-a-ne, where Jesus said to the disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray."

He took with him Peter, James, and John, and went farther into the garden.

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; stay here, and watch with me," he said to them.

Going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; yet, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Then an angel from heaven appeared, strengthening him. Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling upon the ground.

When he rose from his prayer, he went back to them, and found them sleeping for sorrow; and he said to Peter, "Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Again, a second time, he went away, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done."

When he returned he found them sleeping again, for their eyes were very heavy; and they knew not what to answer him.

Then he went away a third time, and prayed, saying the same words.

When he returned, he said to them, "Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Then he added: "Rise up, let us be going; behold, he that betrays me is near!"

The Arrest

Even while he was speaking Judas entered the garden with a band of men, sent by the chief priests and Pharisees, armed with swords and clubs, and carrying lanterns and torches.



WHEN HE SAW JESUS HE SAID, "HAIL, MASTER," AND KISSED HIM

(305)

Now the traitor had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I shall kiss, that is he; hold him fast."

When he saw Jesus he said, "Hail, Master," and kissed him.

Jesus looked at the traitor, and said, "Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

Then turning to the armed men, he asked, "Whom do you seek?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said.

"I am he," Jesus replied.

When they heard that, the men went backward in surprise and fell to the ground.

Jesus stepped forward and asked them again, "Whom do you seek?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said again.

"I have told you that I am he; if therefore you seek me, let these men go their way," he said, pointing to his disciples.

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

When Simon Peter saw that, he drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

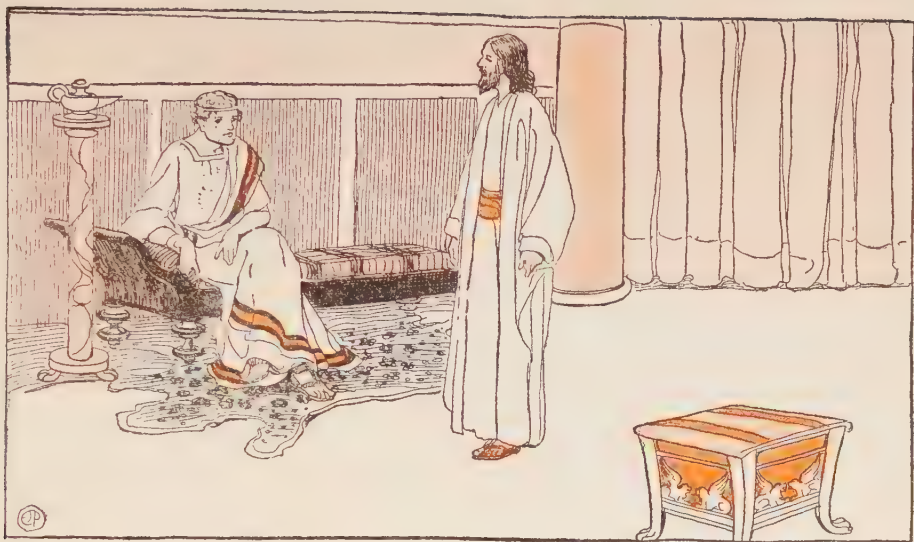
Jesus said to Peter, "Put up your sword in its sheath; for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword. Do you think I cannot pray my Father, and he will even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

So saying, he touched the servant's ear and healed him.

"Are you come out against me with swords and clubs, as if I were a robber?" he said to his captors. "I sat daily in the temple, teaching, and you did not take me; but this is your hour, and the hour of the power of darkness."

So the soldiers and officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him and led him away.

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled; but Simon Peter and John followed him at a little distance.



THEN PILATE ENTERED INTO THE PALACE AGAIN, AND CALLED JESUS, AND JESUS STOOD BEFORE HIM

XXXI

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Before Annas

LEAVING the garden, the soldiers took their prisoner to the court of An-nas, the father-in-law of Cai-a-phas who was high priest that year.

Simon Peter and John followed after Jesus. Now John was known to the high priest, so he was allowed to go into the court; and the maid at the door let Peter in with him.

Annas, who was waiting, questioned Jesus about his disciples, and his teaching.

"I spoke openly to the world," Jesus answered; "I always taught in the synagogue and the temple, where the Jews assemble, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard me what I have said to them; they know."

When he had thus spoken, one of the officers who was standing by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do you answer the high priest so?"

"If I have spoken evil," Jesus replied, "bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?"

Before Caiaphas

Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest.

Now the chief priests and all the council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death, but they could not find it. Though many bore false witness against him, yet no two of them agreed together.

Then two of them stood up and said, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, made without hands.' "

Even so, their witnesses did not agree together.

"Do you answer nothing? What is it that these two witness against you?" demanded Caiaphas, standing up.

Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing.

"I adjure you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God!" cried the high priest.

Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

At these words, the high priest tore his clothes, and cried: "He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; what think you?"

All the chief priests answered, "He is worthy of death!"

Then the men who held Jesus mocked him, spit in his face, blindfolded him, and struck him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy, you Christ, who is he that struck you?" And others reviled him.

Peter Denies His Master

While the trial was going on, Peter remained in the courtyard. The officers and servants who were waiting there, had made a charcoal fire, for the night was cold, and Peter sat shivering by the fire, waiting to see the end.

One of the maids of the high priest came up, and seeing Peter warming himself, looked hard at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee. Are you one of his disciples?"

"I am not," Peter replied, before them all; and went out into the porch.

After a little while another maid saw him there, and said to those about him: "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth." Then to Peter: "Are you not one of his disciples?"

Again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the man."

About an hour afterward, one of the servants of the high priests, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, saw him, and asked, "Surely you are one of them; did I not see you in the garden with him?"

Peter began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man."

At that very moment, even while he was speaking, the cock crowed.

Peter looked toward the place where Jesus was standing, a prisoner, and saw Jesus looking at him. Then he remembered his Master's words, and went out into the night and wept bitterly.

Before the Jewish Council

When the morning came, the day of the passover, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people all met together and had Jesus brought before their council.

There he stood alone awaiting his sentence.

"Are you the Christ?" they demanded. "Tell us."

"If I tell you, you will not believe," Jesus replied; "and if I ask you a question, you will not answer me, nor let me go. But hereafter the Son of man will be seated on the right hand of the power of God."

"Are you then the Son of God?" they all cried.

"You say that I am," Jesus replied.

"What need have we of further witness?" they shouted. "We ourselves have heard it from his own lips."

So they condemned Jesus and led him away, bound, to Pilate's judgment hall; and they all went with him.

The End of the Traitor

When Judas who betrayed Jesus saw that his Master was condemned, he repented of his deed; but it was too late.

Bringing back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, he said, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood."

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That is your affair."

The traitor flung the silver pieces down on the temple floor at their feet; and hurried away and hanged himself.

The chief priests gathered up the money, and said, "It is not lawful to put this back into the temple treasury, because it is the price of blood."

So they took counsel together and afterwards bought with it the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Jesus Before Pilate

When the accusers of Jesus arrived with their prisoner at Pilate's palace, it was the early morning of the passover; and they would not enter the palace on that day, lest they become defiled by going into the house of a person who was not a Jew. If they became defiled they could not eat the passover, which they wanted to do.

So Pilate, who was the Roman governor, came out to them, and asked, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

"If this man were not a criminal, we should not have brought him to you," they replied.

"Take him yourselves," Pilate answered, "and judge him according to your law."

"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," they replied.

Then they began to accuse Jesus, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

"Do you hear what they witness against you?" said Pilate.

But he gave no answer, not even a word; and Pilate marvelled greatly.

Then Pilate entered into the palace again, and called Jesus, and Jesus stood before him.

"Are you the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked.

"Do you say this of yourself, or did others tell it you?" Jesus answered.

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate returned. "Your own nation and the chief priests have brought you here. What have you done?"

"My kingdom is not of this world," Jesus answered; "if it were, then my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but my kingdom is not here."

"Are you a king then?" the governor asked.

"You say that I am a king," Jesus answered. "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice."

"Truth! What is truth?" Pilate retorted.

Leaving Jesus there, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no crime in him."

But they cried out still more fiercely, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, even unto this place."

When Pilate heard that, he asked if Jesus were a Galilæan. When he found that he was from Herod's province, he sent him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at that time.

This was the Herod who killed John the Baptist.

Jesus Before Herod

When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he had desired to see him for a long time, because he had heard so much of him. Now he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He questioned him in many words, but Jesus answered him nothing.

Meanwhile the chief priests and scribes stood there, bitterly accusing him.

So Herod and his soldiers set him at nought, and mocked him, and, arraying him in gorgeous apparel, sent him back to Pilate.

Herod and Pilate, who had before been enemies, became friends that day.

Jesus Before Pilate Again

When Jesus was sent back to Pilate, Pilate called together the accusers. "You brought to me this man, as one who stirs up the people," he said. "See, I have examined him before you, and do not find him guilty of the things of which you accuse him; nor did Herod, for he sent him back. Since nothing worthy of death has been done by him, I will have him whipped and let him go.

"You have a custom," he went on, "that I should release one prisoner at the feast of the passover; do you wish therefore that I release Bar-abbas or Jesus, the King of the Jews?"

"Away with this man! Release Barabbas!" they all cried out together.

Now Barabbas was a robber, who was then lying bound in prison, accused of murder.

Even while Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man; for I have suffered many things in a dream because of him."

But the chief priests stirred up the mob to demand that Barabbas be released, and Jesus put to death. So when the governor asked again, "Which of the two shall I release?" they all cried, "Barabbas!"

"What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?" Pilate asked.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" they shouted.

Pilate, desiring to release Jesus, spoke to them again the third time.

"Why, what evil has this man done?" he asked. "I have

found no cause of death in him. I will therefore have him whipped, and let him go."

But the mob shouted still more fiercely, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

When Pilate saw that he could do nothing with the mob, but that a tumult was arising, he took a bowl of water and washed his hands before them, saying, "I am free from the blood of this innocent man; see you to it."

"His blood be on us, and on our children," all the people answered.

Then Pilate gave sentence that what they asked should be done; he released Barabbas the robber to them, but delivered Jesus to be whipped and crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away to the guard room of the palace, and called together their whole band. They stripped him, and put on him a purple robe, and plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spit upon him, and took the reed, and struck him on the head.

Pilate went out to the mob again, and said, "See, I bring him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him."

Then Jesus was led out, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, and Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

When his accusers saw Jesus thus arrayed, they cried out again, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take him, and crucify him yourselves," Pilate answered; "for I find no crime in him."

"We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God," they shouted.

When Pilate heard that, he was the more afraid; and he went again into the judgment hall and asked Jesus, privately, "Where do you come from?"

Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate said to him, "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify you and power to release you?"

"You could have no power at all against me," Jesus answered, "except it were given you from above; therefore he who delivered me up to you has the greater sin."

Upon this, Pilate again tried to release him, but the Jews shouted angrily, "If you let this man go, you are not Cæsar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king, speaks against Cæsar."

When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus out again, and sat down in the judgment seat.

"Behold your King!" he said.

"Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your King?" asked Pilate.

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

Then, at last, Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified.

When the soldiers had mocked him again, they took from him the purple robe, and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him.



"LET US NOT TEAR HIS COAT, BUT CAST LOTS FOR IT," THEY SAID

XXXII

AT THE CROSS

"Father, Forgive Them"

LAYING his cross upon the shoulders of their prisoner, the soldiers led him away to Calvary.

As they were going out of the city, they met a man named Simon, coming in from the country. The soldiers stopped this man, and laid the heavy cross upon him that he might bear it after Jesus.

There followed them a great company of people; and the women were weeping, and beating their breasts because of their sorrow.

There were also two robbers who were to be put to death with him.

When they were come to the hill which is called Calvary, the

place of a skull, they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall; but when he had tasted it, he would not drink.

There they crucified him, and the two robbers; one on his right hand and the other on the left, and Jesus in the center.

As the soldiers nailed him to the cross, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The Soldiers

When the deed was done, the soldiers took his garments, and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

"Let us not tear the coat, but cast lots for it," they said, and this they did.

Sitting down, they watched him there.

On the cross over his head was a title which Pilate had written:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS

This title was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, so that everyone could read it.

When the chief priests saw it, they went to Pilate, and said, "Write not, 'The King of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'"

"What I have written, I have written," was Pilate's reply.

The People

Some of the people stood looking on, while others reviled Jesus, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah, you that would destroy the temple, and build it again in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save! If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let God deliver him now, if he cares for him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"



THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM, AND THE TWO ROBBERS
(317)

The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself."

The Robbers

Even one of the robbers who was hanging there with him, threw the same taunt in his teeth, railing at him. "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us," he cried.

But the robber hanging on the other side rebuked him.

"Do you not fear God," he said, "seeing that you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive due punishment for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, to-day you shall be with me in Paradise."

Jesus' Mother

Now there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdelene; and John was with them.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother and John, whom he loved, standing there together, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

Then he said to John, "Behold your mother!"

From that hour, John took Jesus' mother to his own home and cared for her.

Darkness Over the Land

About noon it began to grow dark, and the darkness spread over the whole land, and the sun was darkened.

So they stood there weeping and watching, and waiting for the end.

About three o'clock, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"

After this, Jesus said, "I thirst."

So they filled a sponge with vinegar; and when Jesus had received it, he said, "It is finished!"

Then, crying with a loud voice, he said:

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

With these words, he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

An Earthquake

Behold, at the time of Jesus' death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent.

Now when the captain and the soldiers who were watching Jesus die, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, and the captain exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God."

And when the people who came running together at the sight, saw the things that had happened, they turned away, beating their breasts.

All his friends, and the women that followed him from Galilee to minister to him, stood afar off beholding these things.

The Burial

Now this was the day before the Jewish Sabbath, and it was contrary to the law of the Jews to allow the bodies to remain upon the cross on the Sabbath, their holy day.

Therefore the Jews begged Pilate that the legs of the victims might be broken, to make death sure, as was the custom, and the bodies taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus.

When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out.

When the evening was come, there came a rich man, Joseph

of Ar-i-ma-thæ-a, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He went boldly to Pilate and begged that he might take away the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if he were already dead, and when the captain of the guard reported that he was, he gave Joseph leave to take the body.

Joseph was a good and a just man. He was a member of the council, but he had not consented to the death of Jesus.

Nic-o-de-mus also, who at one time had come to Jesus by night to learn of him, brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

Then they took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in a fine linen cloth with the spices, as is the manner of the Jews in burying.

Near the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden there was a new tomb hewn out of the rock, in which man never before was laid. This tomb belonged to Joseph. There they laid Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, and the women also who had followed Jesus from Galilee, saw where he was laid.

Then they went away and prepared spices and ointments, and rested on the Sabbath Day, according to the commandment.

The Watch at the Tomb

Now on the morrow, the chief priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command, therefore, that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say to the people, 'He is risen from the dead,' so that the last error will be worse than the first."

"You have watchmen," Pilate said; "go your way, and make it as secure as you can."

So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone, and setting soldiers to guard it.



"MARY," JESUS SAID GENTLY

XXXIII

JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD

The Empty Tomb

AS it began to dawn on the first day of the week, even while it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the tomb, and were astonished at what they saw—the tomb had been opened.

There had been a great earthquake, and an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, and rolling back the stone from the door of the tomb, had sat upon the stone. His countenance was like lightning, his raiment as white as snow, and for fear of him the watchmen shook, and became as dead men.

When the women saw that the stone was rolled away, Mary Magdalene, waiting to see no more, ran back to Peter and John with her strange news.

Timidly the other women entered the tomb, but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were looking about much

perplexed, two men stood by them in shining garments. Terrified, they bowed down their faces to the earth.

"Do not fear," the men said to them. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. See the place where they laid him. But go quickly and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is risen from the dead, and that he goes before you into Galilee. There you shall see him, as he told you."

So the women went out quickly, and fled from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell the disciples; for they trembled and were amazed; and were afraid to say anything to anyone they met.

While Peter and John were sitting in their lodgings, sunk in despair, Mary Magdalene came running in breathlessly, and cried, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Leaving her to follow, Peter and John ran together, but John outran Peter and came first to the tomb. Stooping down, he looked in and saw the linen clothes lying there, but he did not go in.

Peter came up and went in boldly, and saw the linen clothes, and the napkin that was about the head of Jesus, folded in a place by itself.

Then John went in and saw and believed, but as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then they went away again to their lodgings.

He Appears to the Women

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene had returned to the tomb and was standing outside weeping. As she wept, she stooped down and looked in, and saw two angels in white, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

"Woman," they asked her, "why do you weep?"

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

So saying she turned around, and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus.

"Woman," Jesus said to her, "why do you weep? Whom do you seek?"

She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

"Mary!" Jesus said gently.

"Teacher!" Mary knew who it was instantly.

"Do not touch me," Jesus said to her, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers, and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'"

Mary set off to tell the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and to deliver his message to them.

Now the other women were on their way back to tell the disciples what they had seen, and behold, Jesus met them, saying, "All hail!"

They came and held him by the feet and worshiped him.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not fear; go, tell my brothers to go away into Galilee, and there they shall see me."

So Mary Magdalene and the other women came and told the apostles that they had seen the Lord, and gave them the messages that he had sent.

When the disciples heard that he was alive, and had been seen by the women, they did not believe it. Their words seemed to them as idle tales; they could not believe them.

Report of the Watchmen

When the women left the tomb, some of the soldiers went to the city and told the chief priests all the things that were done; how an angel had rolled away the stone from the door of the

tomb, and they had been so stricken with fright that they had become as dead men.

When the chief priests and the elders had consulted together, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, and told them to say, "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." "And," they added, "if the governor hears about it, we will save you from trouble."

The soldiers took the money, and did as they were told; and this story was commonly reported among the Jews.

The Walk to Emmaus

On the afternoon of that very day, two of the disciples, who were not of the Twelve, were walking to Em-ma-us, a village about seven miles distant from Jerusalem.

As they were talking of all the things which had happened, Jesus himself drew near, and walked with them, but they did not recognize him.

"What are you talking so earnestly about as you walk? And why are you so sad?" he asked.

The men stopped; and one of them, named Cle-o-pas, spoke.

"Are you a stranger in Jerusalem, that you do not know the things that have happened in these days?"

"What things?" Jesus asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death; and have crucified him. We were hoping that it was he who should have redeemed Israel. Now he is dead, and to-day is the third day since these things were done.

"Yes, and some of the women of our company who were early at the tomb astonished us when they returned saying that his body was not there, and that they had seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

"Yes, and some of those who were with us went to the tomb,

and found it even as the women had said, but they did not see him."

"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Jesus said to them. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Then beginning at Moses, and the prophets, he explained to them the Scriptures about himself.

As they drew near to Emmaus he made as though he would go further; but they urged him saying, "Stay with us; it is evening and the day is far spent."

So he stayed with them.

While he sat at supper with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and broke it and gave to them.

Then their eyes were opened, and they knew him; but he vanished out of their sight.

They looked at each other in wonder and amazement; and asked,

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road, and opened to us the Scriptures?"

Rising up that very hour, they hastened back to Jerusalem and found the disciples and their friends gathered behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews.

"The Lord is risen indeed," they declared; telling what had happened on the road, and how Jesus became known to them in the breaking of bread.

He Appears to His Disciples

Even while they were talking, Jesus himself stood before them, and said, "Peace be to you."

They looked at him in fear and amazement, imagining that they were seeing a spirit.

"Why are you troubled?" he asked. "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see me; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have."

While they could hardly believe for joy and wonder, he asked, "Have you anything here to eat?"

They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and part of a honeycomb, and he took the food and ate before them.

After that, he said to them again, "Peace be to you; as my Father has sent me, even so I send you."

When he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

He Appears to Thomas

Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not present when Jesus came the first time.

"We have seen the Lord," they said; and told him all about it.

"Unless I see the print of the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe," he declared.

Eight days after, they were together again, and Thomas was there. Then Jesus came a second time, although the door was shut, and stood among them, and said, "Peace be to you."

Turning to Thomas, he said, "Reach here your finger, and see my hands; reach here your hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless but believing."

Thomas gave one look, and answered, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed; happy are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

He Appears to Seven by the Sea

After this, Jesus showed himself again to seven of his disciples by the Sea of Galilee, after they had returned to Galilee, as he had told them to do. It was in this way.

Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the brothers James and John, and two others were together by the sea.

"I am going fishing," Peter told them.



THEN JOHN KNEW WHO IT WAS, AND SAID TO PETER, "IT IS THE LORD"

(327)

"We will go with you," they all said.

Going aboard their boat at once, they fished all night, and caught nothing.

When the day dawned, Jesus was standing on the beach, but they did not recognize him, although they were only about three hundred feet from land.

"Children, have you anything to eat?" he called to them.

They answered, "No."

"Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some fish," he called again.

They did so, and were not able to draw up the net for the fishes.

Then John knew who it was; and said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Peter heard that, he pulled on his fisher's coat, and jumped into the sea to go to him.

The rest followed in the little boat, dragging the net full of fishes after them.

As soon as they were come to land, they saw a charcoal fire, with fish cooking on it, and a loaf of bread.

"Bring the fish you have just caught," Jesus said.

Peter drew in the net to land, full of large fishes, and counted one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, yet the net was not broken.

"Come and breakfast," Jesus said.

None of them dare ask him, "Who are you?" knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus sat down, and served them with bread and fish.

This was now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after he was risen from the dead.

When they had breakfasted Jesus began talking to Simon Peter, and asked him three times if he loved him.

Peter was hurt when he asked him the third time, and he cried out, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said. "Truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go."

This he said, indicating the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

And so Peter knew that he was forgiven, and ever after he followed his Master, at last dying for him.

He Appears to the Eleven on a Mountain

After that, the disciples gathered at a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had appointed them.

Jesus came and spoke to them, saying:

"All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all the commands I have given you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

He Ascends to Heaven

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead the disciples were back in Jerusalem. There he gave them his final orders, and opened their minds so that they might understand the Scriptures concerning him.

"Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and rise from the dead the third day," he explained; "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things; and behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but remain in Jerusalem, until you are clothed with power from on high."

He led them out for the last time till they were over against Bethany on the Mount of Olives; and there he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

It came to pass, while he was blessing them, he parted from

them and was carried up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight. While they were looking steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by in white apparel; who said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."

Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

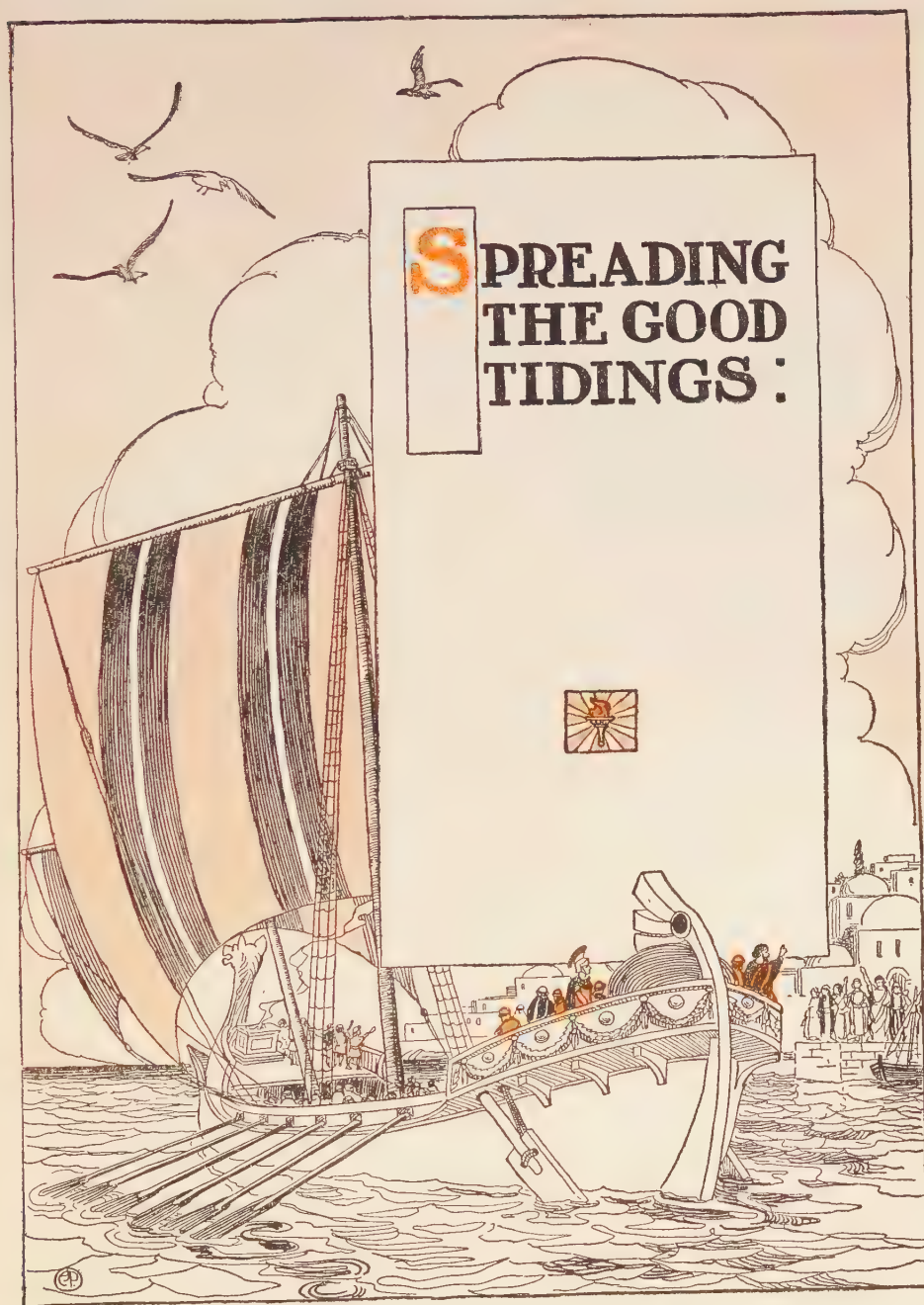
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Uncle Ben's book suddenly came to an end; there was not another word. The boy sat with it open in his hands and gazed at it for a long time, lost in wonder at what they had been reading.

"And every one who believed in him loved him," the little girl whispered to herself; and then looked up with a start—to see Aunt Maria bending over her, with a tender smile on her face.

"Yes, my dear children," said the old lady, who had overheard, "but not half the kind loving deeds of his life have ever been told."

"There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written."—JOHN 21:25.



SPREADING THE GOOD TIDINGS

“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations,
.....teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I
commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto
the end of the world.”—MATTHEW 28: 19, 20.



A VOLLEY OF STONES BROUGHT STEPHEN TO HIS KNEES

XXXIV

COWARDS BECOME BRAVE MEN

THE next day, Billy, Mary Frances, and Aunt Maria were seated in the living room, going over and over again what they had been reading.

“And now, my dears,” said the old lady, opening her Bible, “I must tell you something about the men who first told the story of Jesus to the world;” and, without further remark, she began.

* * * * *

When their Master died, Peter and John and the other disciples thought that the end of the world had come. When he rose again, their happiness knew no bounds. When they saw him ascend into heaven, they were filled with wonder.

In his last message on earth Jesus told them to go teach all

nations what he had taught them; but to wait in Jerusalem until they had received power from on high.

The disciples did not have to wait long. Ten days after Jesus had left them, when they were all together in one place, suddenly there came a sound out of heaven, like a rushing mighty wind; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages, for the Spirit gave them the power.

Now there were present in Jerusalem at that time, many good men, who had come from every nation under heaven. When they heard the apostles speaking to them in their own languages, they asked: "Are not these men from Galilee? How is it that we hear them speaking in different languages about the wonderful works of God? What does this mean?"

Peter answered them, saying: "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, God has raised up from the dead, and we are witnesses of his resurrection. He has ascended to the right hand of God and poured out the Holy Spirit upon us."

Then he cried out, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ!"

About three thousand believed and were baptized on that day.

After this, the apostles were never again afraid. The cowards had become brave men; those who had run away on the night their Master was arrested were now ready to die for him; and Peter, who denied his Master, became the boldest of them all.

The Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate

A man who was lame from his birth was carried to the temple every day and laid at the gate known as the Beautiful Gate, to ask alms.

As Peter and John were going into the temple at the hour of prayer, about three o'clock in the afternoon, this man asked alms of them. They stopped, and fixed their eyes on him.

"Look at us," said Peter.

The man looked up, expecting to receive something from them.

"Silver and gold have I none," said Peter; "but such as I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

As he said this, Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up.

Immediately his feet and ankle bones became strong, and he leaped up and began to walk; and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

On the next day the rulers of the people brought Peter and John and the healed man before them.

"By what power, or by what name, do you do this?" they asked them.

Then Peter said to them: "Be it known to you all that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand before you well."

Now when the chief priests saw the boldness of Peter and John, and knew that they were common and unlearned men, they wondered, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus; but seeing the healed man standing there, they could say nothing against it.

So the chief priests threatened them, and ordered them strictly not to speak in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered boldly, "Whether it is right to obey you rather than God, judge, for we cannot but tell the things which we have seen and heard."

The Disciples in Prison

Now all the apostles continued to meet in Solomon's porch, and many signs and wonders were performed among the people.

Still more believers in the Lord were added, crowds both of men and women; they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, so that, as Peter was passing, his shadow at least might fall on some of them and heal them.

Crowds also came from the towns near Jerusalem, bringing sick persons, and people vexed with unclean spirits; and they were all healed.

Soon the high priest and his friends became very jealous of the apostles, so they arrested them, and locked them up in the public prison.

But that did them little good, for an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors that night, and on leading them out, told them, "Go stand in the temple, and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

In the morning the high priest called the council together, and sent to the prison house for the prisoners; but the officers did not find them there. The guards were standing at the doors, but when the doors were opened, there was no one inside!

When the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard this, they were much puzzled.

Just then a messenger came in.

"The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple teaching the people," he told them.

Then the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles, but without violence, for they feared stoning by the crowd.

When the apostles faced the council, the high priest asked them, "Did we not strictly order you not to teach in this name?"

But Peter and the apostles answered:

"We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you hanged on a cross; and we are his witnesses; so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

When they heard this they were so mad with rage that they began planning to kill the apostles; but after giving them a whipping, and again ordering them not to speak in the name of Jesus, they let them go.

So the apostles went out rejoicing that they were counted

worthy to suffer shame for his name. Not for a single day did they stop preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the temple or anywhere else.

The Young Man Who was Stoned to Death

In those early days the number of disciples grew very fast; so the apostles chose seven men to help them in their work. One of these men was Stephen, a young Grecian Jew. Stephen, because of his faith in Jesus, did so many signs and wonders among the people that he soon made enemies.

The elders and scribes seized him and brought him before the council, and set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak words against this holy place, the temple, and against the law."

All the council sat with their eyes fixed upon Stephen, and saw his face shining as if it had been the face of an angel.

"Are these things true?" demanded the high priest.

"You always resist the Holy Spirit," he replied; "as your fathers did, so do you. They killed those who told of the coming of the Just One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered."

While he was saying these things they were so angry that they kept gnashing their teeth at him.

But Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed up at the sky, and exclaimed, "Look, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

At these words his judges broke into loud cries, put their hands over their ears, leaped from their seats, and rushing on him with one accord, dragged him outside the gates of the city to stone him.

Saul, a young Jew, was standing by, well pleased with what was going on. When the witnesses stripped off their coats and threw them at his feet, he took care of them while they were hurling stones at Stephen.

As the stones rained on him, Stephen stood looking up and praying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

A volley of stones brought him to his knees; and a loud cry broke from his lips, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!"

When he had said this, he fell asleep in death; and his friends carried him to his burial.

On that day there began a great persecution of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, many of whom hurried away to save their lives. Saul entered house after house, dragging out both men and women, and putting them in prison. But many escaped and were scattered throughout the country, and wherever they went they carried the teachings of their Master with them.

Saul Blinded by a Great Light

Saul, the young Jew who had taken care of the coats of the men who stoned Stephen to death, was born in Tarsus, a city of Asia Minor; but he was educated in Jerusalem in the strict law of the Pharisees. His Jewish name was Saul, but the name by which he is best known is Paul.

In persecuting the disciples of Jesus, this young man thought he was doing God service. In his rage against them, he went to the high priests and got orders to go to Damascus and arrest all the disciples he found there, both men and women, and to bring them as prisoners back to Jerusalem.

Then a strange thing happened to Saul—he met Jesus on the road.

As he was traveling on his errand, he came near to Damascus about noon, when suddenly there flashed about him a blaze of light out of heaven, above the brightness of the sun; and he fell to the ground.

He heard a voice speaking out of the light: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" he asked.

"I am Jesus whom you persecute," the voice replied.

"Lord, what will you have me to do?" he asked, trembling and astonished.

"Rise up, and go into the city," the voice directed, "and it shall be told you what you must do."

The officers who were traveling with him stood there speechless and afraid; for they saw the light and heard the sound, but could not see anyone.

When the stricken man got up from the ground, and opened his eyes, he could see nothing; so his companions led him by the hand, and brought him into the city. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there lived in Damascus a disciple called Ananias; and to this man the Lord spoke in a vision.

"Ananias!" he said.

"I am here, Lord," Ananias answered.

"Rise up, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man named Saul of Tarsus," the Lord told him; "for he is praying; and in a vision he saw a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

"Lord, I have heard from many people about this man," Ananias answered; "how much evil he has done to the disciples at Jerusalem; and now he comes here with orders from the high priest to bind with chains all who call on thy name."

"Go your way," the Lord told him. "I have chosen this man to carry my name to the Gentiles, and to kings, and to the sons of Israel; I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Then Ananias did as the Lord told him, and went to the house where Saul was and found him.

"Brother Saul," he said, putting his hands on him, "the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

The scales fell from Saul's eyes immediately; his sight came back, and he rose up, and was baptized.

Then he spent some days with the disciples at Damascus, going into the synagogues and preaching boldly that Jesus was the Son of God.

But all who heard him were astonished and asked, "Is not this the man who destroyed those in Jerusalem who call on this name? Has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound in chains to the chief priests?"

But Saul grew in strength, and stirred up the Jews in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the very Christ. After many days, the Jews did what Saul had formerly done to others—they plotted to kill him.

Day and night they watched the gates of the city, lying in wait to kill him as he left the city; so one night the disciples took the man who had come to arrest them, and lowered him over the city wall in a basket, and he escaped in safety.

When Saul returned to Jerusalem later and attempted to join the other disciples, they were all afraid of him and would not believe his story.

Barnabas, a trusted disciple, took him to the apostles, and told them how Saul had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he lived with them in Jerusalem, speaking openly for his new Master, and debating with the Grecian Jews; but they, too, plotted to kill him. When the disciples learned of this, they brought him down to Cæs-a-re-a, and sent him by ship to Tar-sus, his native city.

Peter in Prison

After the death of Stephen, the disciples went everywhere preaching in the name of Jesus. Some of them traveled as far as Crete and Cy-prus. It was in An-ti-och in Syr-i-a that the disciples were first called Christians.

So many people believed what the disciples taught, that a new persecution arose. Herod arrested James, the brother of John, and beheaded him with the sword. Thus James was the first of the apostles to die for his Master. The Herod who did this cruel deed was the grandson of that Herod who tried to kill the child Jesus by destroying the children of Bethlehem.

When Herod saw that the death of James pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter also during the passover, and put him in prison, with a guard of sixteen soldiers over him. He intended to bring him out for trial when the feast was over.

While Peter was kept in prison, his friends prayed earnestly for his release. Peter would have died as willingly as James for his Master, but he still had work to do, and so God released him.

The very night before the day set for his trial and almost certain death, he was sleeping in his cell between two soldiers. He was bound to each soldier with chains, and there were guards at the door, so that he could not escape.

Suddenly a light shone in his cell, and an angel of the Lord stood by him, who touched him on the side, saying, "Rise up quickly!"

The chains fell from Peter's hands; and the angel said, "Bind on your sandals"; and he did so.

"Put on your cloak, and follow me," the angel ordered.

Peter followed the angel out of the cell, but he thought it was a dream.

When they were past the first and second guards, they came to the iron gate of the prison, which opened of its own accord. They went out and passed on through one street, and there the angel left him.

When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know truly that the Lord sent his angel, and delivered me from the hand of Herod."

Then he hastened to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where the disciples were gathered together praying.

He knocked at the gate, and a maid named Rhoda came to

learn who was there. When she recognized his voice, she did not open the gate for gladness, but ran in and told them that Peter was knocking at the gate.

"You are mad," they cried, not believing that their prayers were answered.

Rhoda kept on repeating that it was true.

"It is his angel," they replied.

Peter kept on knocking; and at last they opened the gate and were amazed to see him walk in.

Raising his hand for them to keep still, for they were all talking at once, he told them how he had escaped out of prison.

"Go and tell these things to the other disciples," he said; and leaving Mary's house, he went to a place of safety.

When the daylight came, there was great excitement among the soldiers of the guard as to how their prisoner had escaped. Herod had the city searched, and when Peter was not caught, he ordered the soldiers to be put to death.



PAUL CRIED OUT TO HIM, "DO YOURSELF NO HARM, FOR WE ARE ALL HERE"

XXXV

PAUL, THE MISSIONARY

AFTER Paul had talked with Jesus on the road to Damascus he could not rest. He had persecuted the disciples bitterly; now he was still more earnest in carrying the message of his new Master to the ends of the earth.

His ambition was to preach to the Jews first, and then to all other nations, and he cared not if he lost his life in doing it. He was often driven out of the towns and cities of Asia Minor where he preached. But this did not stop him. When he was expelled from one place, he went on to another; and wherever he went he made new disciples.

At Lys-tra on one occasion, the Jews stirred up the mob to such a pitch that they stoned him, dragged him outside the city gates and left him for dead, but when his friends gathered around him, he recovered and returned to the city.

The Call to Europe

When Paul was at Tro-as in Asia Minor with Silas and Timothy, on his second missionary tour, he had a vision in the night. In this vision he saw a man from Mac-e-do-ni-a who stood begging him to come over to Europe and help his people.

Paul and Silas immediately set off to Macedonia to proclaim the good news, and in a few days arrived in the city of Phi-lip-pi where Luke joined them. It was not long before the two missionaries were arrested and brought before the magistrates.

"These men greatly trouble our city," their accusers said, "by teaching customs which are contrary to the Roman law."

The magistrates ordered the clothes of the two men to be torn off, and their backs to be beaten with rods.

This was nothing new to Paul. In one of his letters to the Corinthians he says that he was beaten five times, receiving thirty-nine lashes each time. Forty lashes was the limit allowed by law; so the whipmasters stopped at the thirty-ninth lash for fear of killing their victim.

Paul and Silas in Prison

After beating Paul and Silas, their tormentors threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. So the jailer put them in the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Paul and Silas were far from being downcast. At midnight they were praying and singing praises to God; and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and instantly all the doors were opened, and the prisoners' chains were loosed.

The jailer, awaking out of sleep, saw the prison door open and drew out his sword, intending to kill himself. He supposed that his prisoners had escaped and he knew that if they had his life would be taken.

Paul cried out to him with a loud voice, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"

Then the jailer called for a light, and sprang in, trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he cried.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and those of your household," Paul answered.

The jailer took them into his house, even at that hour of the night, and washed their stripes where they had been beaten, gave them food, and was baptized, himself and his family, immediately.

When the morning came, the magistrates sent officers with an order: "Let those men go."

The jailer of the prison brought the order to Paul and Silas and said: "The magistrates have sent word to let you go; now therefore, come out, and go in peace."

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

On his return from Macedonia, during his third missionary tour, Paul determined to go to Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost; and Luke went with him.

At every city where he stopped on his way, the disciples begged him not to go, knowing only too well the danger he ran.

"What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart?" Paul cried. "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When he would not be persuaded, they kept still, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

When Paul arrived at Jerusalem the disciples welcomed him gladly.

The next day he went to see James, the Lord's brother, and all the elders were present. When he had saluted them, Paul told them of the things that God had done in Asia Minor and in Europe, and when they heard it they glorified God.

Paul had scarcely been in Jerusalem a week before some of

the Jews from Asia who had persecuted him caught sight of him in the temple.

Immediately they stirred up the crowd, and laying hold of him cried out:

“Men of Israel, help! Here is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; he has also brought Gentiles into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”

Attempt to Kill Paul

The whole city was thrown into an uproar; the people ran together, and seizing Paul dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were closed.

As they were trying to kill him, word was brought to the commanding officer of the troops stationed there, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Taking a company of soldiers, he came down on the run; and the mob, seeing the officer and his men, left off beating Paul.

The officer ordered him to be bound with two chains; and asked who he was, and what he had done.

Some of the crowd shouted one thing, and some another, making such a noise that the officer could not tell what it was all about, so he ordered them to lead Paul into the prison.

By the time they reached the prison steps, Paul had to be carried by the soldiers, so great was the violence of the people. For the mob pressed upon him, crying out, “Away with him! Away with him!” just as they had done to Paul’s Master not so many years before.

As he was about to enter the prison, Paul said to the officer, “I beg you to allow me to speak to the people.”

When he had received permission, he stood on the steps and raised his hand, and there was a great silence.

“Brothers and fathers, listen to my defense which I now make to you,” he began.

Hearing him speak to them in Hebrew, their own tongue, the people remained quiet.

Then he told them how Jesus had appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

"I had imprisoned and beaten in every synagogue those who believed; and when the blood of Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, well pleased, and keeping the garments of those who stoned him. Then the Lord said to me, 'Depart; for I will send you to preach my name among the Gentile nations.' "

When the people heard him say that he was sent to carry the name of Jesus to people who were not Jews, they shouted:

"Away with this fellow from the earth! He is not fit to live!"

In their blindness they thought God cared only for the Jews. As they cried out, they tossed their garments, and threw dust in the air.

The commanding officer ordered Paul to be brought inside the prison and examined by scourging, that he might learn why the people were thus shouting against him.

As they were binding him with straps to beat him, Paul, who was a Roman citizen, said to the officer, "Is it lawful for you to whip a Roman citizen before his trial?"

At this they let him alone. Even the chief officer was afraid, because it was unlawful to bind a Roman citizen before trial, much less beat him.

The next day, wishing to know what the Jews accused Paul of, the commanding officer ordered him to be brought before the Jewish council. Earnestly looking at the council, Paul said:

"Men and brothers, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

Here the high priest interrupted, and ordered those who stood beside Paul to strike him in the mouth.

Then Paul said to him: "God is about to strike you, you white-washed wall! Do you sit there to judge me according to law, and order me to be struck contrary to law?"

Those who stood by said, "What! Do you revile God's high priest?"

"I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest," Paul replied; "for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.'"

Then he cried out, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee—now being judged because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!"

This stirred up a quarrel between the Pharisees of the council, who believed in the resurrection of the dead, and the Sadducees, who did not believe in it.

When the Pharisees took sides with Paul, the quarrel grew so fierce that the commanding officer, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, ordered his soldiers to rescue him and take him back to prison.

The next night the Lord stood by him.

"Be of good courage," the Lord said; "as you have witnessed for me in Jerusalem, so you must carry my name to Rome also."

When it was day certain Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. There were more than forty of them in this plot.

Paul's nephew, who was keeping his eyes open, learned of the plot, and told Paul in the prison, who sent him to the commanding officer.

The commanding officer took the young man aside, and asked him privately, "What have you to tell me?"

Then he revealed the plot to him.

"See that you tell no one," the officer charged him.

Calling two captains, he gave this order:

"Make ready a guard of two hundred foot soldiers, two hundred spearmen, and seventy horsemen; and take Paul down to Cæsarea to-night, and deliver him safe to Felix the governor."

So the officers took Paul in safety down to Cæsarea and delivered him to the governor Felix, who kept him in prison for two years, until a new governor, Festus, took Felix' place.

Paul Goes to Rome, a Prisoner

As soon as Festus took office, he went up to Jerusalem. There the Jews again accused Paul and begged the new governor to send him to Jerusalem for trial. Their plan was to kill him on the road. But Festus refused their request, and asked them to return to Cæsarea with him, which they did.

The day after their arrival the governor sat on the judgment seat, and ordered Paul to be brought in. Then the Jews made many bitter charges against him, which they could not prove.

"Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar have I sinned at all," was Paul's answer.

"Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?" Festus asked him.

"I am now standing at Cæsar's judgment seat," Paul replied, "where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you well know. If I am a criminal, and have done anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of their charges are true, no man can deliver me up to them. I am a Roman citizen; I appeal to Cæsar."

Festus answered: "You have appealed to Cæsar; to Cæsar you shall go." So the missionary, who longed to carry the gospel to Rome, was sent to Rome—a prisoner.

While in the Roman prison, Paul preached boldly to all who came to visit him, and no one forbade him.

After two years he was released, but was later rearrested and killed in the cruel persecution of the Christians which arose under Nero. It is said that, like John the Baptist, he was beheaded. Among the last words which the brave apostle wrote are these in a letter to Timothy:

"I have fought a good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith."



SHE CLUCKED TO HER HORSE AND TURNED THE SLEIGH TOWARD HOME

XXXVI

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

SILENCE filled the room as Aunt Maria stopped speaking. The old lady and her two listeners sat quietly looking out the window.

After a while, Mary Frances said, "I wish everybody knew the story of Jesus. I wish everybody in the whole wide world knew about him, Auntie."

"So do I, my dear," said her aunt. "So do I! And your saying it makes me very happy; for I know that both of you will tell his story, wherever you can, to those who do not know about him."

The little girl threw her arms around her aunt's neck and kissed her. "I promise to do that," she said.

Boy like, her brother said nothing, but sat silent, with his hands clinched.

At that moment there came the sound of the doorbell echoing through the hallways of the old house.

"Who can it be?" asked Aunt Maria. "Now, don't you wonder who that can be?"

There was something about the way in which she spoke that made the children look up at her curiously. Yes, there was certainly a twinkle in the old lady's eyes.

"Mother!" exclaimed the little girl. "It's—oh, Aunt Maria, I just believe it is mother!" and away she ran, as fast as she could scamper, with Billy close behind; and when they opened the door, sure enough, there stood their mother.

"Oh—oh—oh!" cried Mary Frances. "You dearest, sweetest, darlingest mother!"

With laughter and tears mother and children hugged and kissed each other; and when Aunt Maria joined them in the old-fashioned parlor, they all talked at once, they were so excited.

"Where is Daddy?" asked Billy. "Why didn't he come with you?"

"He couldn't come, dear," answered his mother. "He had to stay in New York. He expects to be waiting for us at home the day after to-morrow."

"Oh, what a lovely, lovely surprise!" cried Mary Frances. "But why didn't you tell us in your letter that you were coming to-day, Mother? I wish I could have dreamed about it."

"I wasn't certain, dear," said her mother; "and I didn't want you to be disappointed."

"I felt that way, too," exclaimed Aunt Maria. "I certainly would not want such dear children to be disappointed!"

"They've been very good," she added a little stiffly, as though she did not know just what to make of herself for such enthusiasm. "Excuse me, please, for a few moments while I look into the kitchen."

While the old lady was gone the happy children began one of their heart-to-heart talks with their mother, in which they told all about Uncle Ben's book and the Bible stories they had learned.

Two days later, Aunt Maria drove her young guests and their mother, bundled up in the old-fashioned sleigh, to the distant station.

"Good-by, Aunty," whispered the little girl, leaning from the window of the car, "good-by, dear Aunty. I shall not forget my promise to tell other people the beautiful stories about my Bible friends."

As Billy tried to say something, the roar of the engine drowned his words, but the noise did not prevent his aunt from seeing his affectionate smile, as he waved his cap good-by; and there was a look of deep happiness on the old lady's face as she clucked to her horse, and turned the sleigh toward home.

"The dear children," she murmured; "the dear children! How little they realize how very happy they will be because they have made friends with the Bible People."

THE END

